



INDIA SHALL IDENTIFY, TRACK AND PUNISH EVERY TERRORIST

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi/Madhubani (Bihar)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday sent out a fierce message that perpetrators of Pahalgam terror attack will be pursued "to the ends of the earth" and promised to "identify, track and punish every terrorist and their backers".

In his first reaction after the dastardly attack, which left 26 dead on Tuesday, Modi also vowed that terrorists and conspirators behind the attack will get a punishment beyond their imagination.

Addressing a public rally in Madhubani, Bihar, Modi suddenly switched from Hindi to English to reiterate his message. It was an apparent move to address the global community about India's intentions and resolve to bring the killers of Pahalgam to justice.

In his first speech after the attack in Pahalgam, the Prime Minister vowed to punish terrorists behind the strike and said

India's spirit will never be broken by terrorism.

Modi then spoke in English and said, "Friends, today from the soil of Bihar, I say to the whole world India will identify, track, and punish every terrorist and their backers. We will pursue them to the ends of the earth. India's spirit will never be broken by terrorism. Terrorism will not go unpunished."

In the stern message, he said, "Every effort will be made to ensure that justice is done. The entire nation is firm in this resolve. Everyone who believes in humanity is with us. I thank the people of various countries and their leaders who have stood with us in these times."

In a message to Pakistan without naming the country, Modi said he will state it categorically that the terrorists who carried out the attack and those who hatched the conspiracy, they will be punished beyond their imagination. "Punishment will definitely be served." The prime minister said the willpower of 140 crore

PM'S PLEDGE TO THE NATION



Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaking at the National Panchayati Raj Day programme in Madhubani district of Bihar PTI

Indians will break the back of patrons of terrorism.

Paying condolences to the victims and their families, he said citizens across the country are in mourning over the brutal manner in which terrorists killed 26 innocent civilians in Kashmir on April 22. The nation stands with their families, he said. Modi, other leaders on the dais and the crowd observed silence to pay homage to the victims of the attack at the beginning of the prime minister's speech.

He said people lost their sons, brothers and husbands and noted that the victims belong to different parts of India, be it Bengal, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Odisha and Bihar. "Our sorrow and anger are same from Kargil to Kanniyakumari," he said. Peace and security are the most necessary conditions for fast development, he added.

Earlier, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar condemned the terror attack at Pahalgam and told the prime minister that the entire nation was united against ter-

rorism. Panchayati Raj Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh said the entire nation had belief in Modi's strength and were confident he would give a befitting reply to the perpetrators of terror at an appropriate time. These strong assertions came a day after India on Wednesday downgraded diplomatic ties with Pakistan and announced a raft of measures, including expulsion of Pakistani military attaches, suspension of the Indus Water Treaty of 1960 and immediate shutting down of the Attari land-transit post in view of the cross-border links to the horrific Pahalgam terror attack.

These decisions were taken in Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) meeting chaired by Prime Minister. He had cut short his visit to Saudi Arabia and returned to New Delhi on Wednesday. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval and Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri briefed him about the situation at the airport.

Army Commando killed in Jammu and Kashmir

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

An elite Para Commando of the Indian Army was 'killed in action' after an encounter broke out during an ongoing search operation in the forest area of Dudu Basantgarh in Udhampur district of Jammu region on Thursday.

A joint team of security forces were combing the area based on the receipt of information about the presence of terrorists in the area.

After the brutal massacre of tourists in Pahalgam, in which 26 tourists were killed and 17 others were wounded on Tuesday, this is the third encounter in the last 24 hours between terrorists and security forces in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Indian Army on Wednesday foiled an infiltration bid in the Uri Nala area of Baramulla, killing two terrorists amid an intense firefight.

The second encounter broke out after terrorists opened fire on security personnel

during a cordon and search operation in the Tangmarg area of Kulgam district of south Kashmir.

It is believed the forces were looking for the same group of terrorists who were earlier spotted in the Joffer area of Ramnagar tehsil on April 9.

After the brutal massacre of tourists in Pahalgam, in which 26 tourists were killed and 17 others were wounded on Tuesday, this is the third encounter in the last 24 hours

"Based on specific intelligence, a joint operation with Jammu and Kashmir Police was launched today in the Basantgarh area of Udhampur," the White Knight Corps said on X. Contact was established, and a fierce firefight ensued, it said.

"One of our bravehearts sustained griev-

ous injuries in the initial exchange and later succumbed despite best medical efforts," the Army said.

The deceased soldier has been identified as Havaladar Jhantu Ali Sheikh of 6 Para of the Special Forces.

"GOC White Knight Corps and all ranks salute braveheart Havaladar Jhantu Ali Shaikh of 6 PARA SE, who made the supreme sacrifice during a counter-terror operation," the Army said on X.

The Army said his indomitable courage and the valour of his team will never be forgotten. "We stand in solidarity with the bereaved family in this moment of grief," the Army added. The operation was still underway when the last reports came in from the spot, they added.

Four suspects were also picked up from the area for questioning.

In the last year, the area of Basantgarh has witnessed several incidents of terrorist violence.

Raksha Mantri holds All Party meet

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ New Delhi

The crucial All Party meeting convened by Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh saw all the political parties including the Opposition extending full support to the Narendra Modi Government in its fight against terrorism. Sources said the Government admitted to security lapses in the recent Pahalgam terror attack, which killed 26 people and injured many others.

The Government briefed leaders of various political parties on the Pahalgam terror attack and heard their views at the All Party meeting. At the beginning of the meeting, a moment of silence was observed for the victims of the attack.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh initiated the discussion at the meeting. Intelligence Bureau Director Tapan Deka gave all leaders a 20-minute briefing on the attack and how it happened. Later, he answered the questions of sev-

eral leaders and Home Minister Amit Shah joined him in answering the queries. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman were also present at the meeting from the government's side.

During the closed door meeting which lasted for about 46 minutes, several Opposition parties asked questions about the apparent failure of security protocols. "Where were the security forces? Where was the Central Reserve Police Force?" several leaders asked, according to sources.

In response, the Government reportedly said local authorities did not inform security agencies before opening the Baisaran area near Pahalgam in Anantnag district, which traditionally remains restricted until the Amarnath Yatra in June. Concerns were also raised about the delayed response to the incident. According to sources, Government officials explained that the site was a 45-

minute uphill walk and that no standard operating procedure (SOP) was in place to handle such situations.

Leaders across party lines assured their support to the Government in taking decisive action against terrorism and destroying terror camps, even as they flagged security lapses in Pahalgam.

Sources said Government claimed it was taking all measures to ensure security. It noted that the attack was aimed at vitiating the atmosphere at a time when the economy was on the upswing and tourism was booming in Jammu and Kashmir.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju said everyone agreed that India should fight terror united and all parties said that they are with the Government in this fight. All political parties have given this message and their leaders have said in one voice that whatever step the Government takes, they will support it.

The ByStander



Read the sign: No entry for Pakistanis

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

India on Thursday scaled up its hard stance in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack by suspending visas to Pakistani nationals with immediate effect. It also advised Indian nationals to avoid travelling to Pakistan and advised those currently there to return home at the earliest.

The account of 'Government of Pakistan' on X (formerly known as Twitter), meanwhile, was withheld in India on Thursday. A message appearing on the handle's X account read, "Account Withheld @GovtofPakistan has been withheld in IN in response to a legal demand."

The new measures came a day after India on Wednesday downgraded diplomatic ties with Pakistan and announced a raft of measures including expulsion of Pakistani military attaches, suspension of the Indus Water Treaty of 1960 and immediate shutting down of the Attari land-transit post in view of the cross-border links to the Pahalgam attack that killed 26 people. Announcing the fresh retaliatory steps, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said all existing valid visas issued by India to Pakistani nationals stand revoked with effect from April 27.

It said medical visas issued to Pakistani nationals will be valid only till April 29. The MEA said all Pakistani nationals currently in India must leave the country



A security official walking past the entrance of the Pakistan High Commission on Thursday. RANJAN DIMRI

before the expiry of visas.

It also strongly advised Indian nationals to avoid travelling to Pakistan and advised those currently in the neighbouring country to return home at the earliest.

The punitive measures against Pakistan were decided at a meeting of Cabinet Committee on Security headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday called on President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here.

Cricketer Gambhir fears for life

VAISHNAVI MISHRA ■ New Delhi

Team India head coach and former Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Member of Parliament (MP) Gautam Gambhir has reportedly received a death threat from "ISIS Kashmir". The threats were allegedly received on April 22 - the same day terrorists gunned down 26 people, mostly tourists, in Kashmir's Pahalgam - from a suspicious Gmail account. The first email threat to Gambhir was sent at 1407hrs on April 22 from an e-mail ID named named jgneshsinhodsodhparmar14@gmail.com while the second mail was received at 1909 hrs from an ID named named chandrossodha3@gmail.com. Both containing the message, "IKillU." Cyber cell of the Delhi Police is currently working to trace the origin of the email and identify the sender.

Gambhir's secretary Gaurav Arora has filed an email complaint with the Delhi Police attaching screenshots of the threat mails. "Dear sir, Namaskar, As we spoke, please find below the "Threat Mails" received on the mail ID of Mr Gautam Gambhir (Ex-MP), Head Coach Indian Cricket Team. Kindly register the FIR accordingly and ensure the safety and security of the family," stated the complaint. Gambhir formally submitted a request for the registration of a First Information Report (FIR) too, according to the SHO Rajinder Nagar Police Station

The threats were allegedly received on April 22, the same day terrorists gunned down 26 people, mostly tourists, in Kashmir's Pahalgam, from suspicious Gmail accounts

and the DCP Central Delhi. "We have been informed about an alleged threat mail received on an email ID associated with Gautam Gambhir. Same is being investigated. We are verifying the email IDs," said Harsha Vardhan, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central).

When asked about if the threats have any connection with the Pahalgam terror attack, he said, "It is too early to say this." The former India cricketer recently returned with his family from a holiday in France after leading Team India to Champions Trophy success before the IPL 2025 began.

On Tuesday, Gambhir condemned the terror attack on tourists in Pahalgam. He posted on X platform, "Praying for the families of the deceased. Those responsible for this will pay. India will strike." This is not the first time Gambhir has received such threats, in November 2021, during his tenure as a sitting Member of Parliament, he had received a similar email.

India mourns its dead: From North to South, East to West

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Jaipur/Ahmedabad/Balasure

Flames leapt from funeral pyres, suppressed sobs and anguished cries mingled with the sound of mantras and the fragrance of flowers and incense lingered. It was the final adieu for the families of those killed in Pahalgam and also for a country in mourning with them.

On Thursday, the last rites of several of the 26 gunned down by terrorists in Baisaran in the upper reaches of Pahalgam were held - from Odisha to Gujarat and from Rajasthan to Karnataka. A snapshot as it were of the prime holiday destination that Kashmir has been for people across the country and indication of the belief that all was well in the volatile Valley.

The dead in Tuesday's terror strike were all men, 26 lives of promise that ended in a hail of bullets. And back in their homes, families grieved for the sons, fathers and husbands they had lost, some stoic and others inconsolable.

A hush fell over many villages and towns as funeral corteges wound their way to crematoriums and shops downed shutters.

In Ishani village in Odisha's Balasure

district, nine-year-old Tanuj Kumar Satpathy lit the pyre of his father Prashant.

It was just two days ago that the family - 41-year-old Prashant, an employee of the Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering & Technology, his wife Priya Darshini and Tanuj - were in Pahalgam.

A distraught Priya Darshini did not allow anyone to touch the body of her husband, hugging it till she crumpled in a faint.

Hundreds of people gathered in Ishani to pay their respects to Prashant, lining up on both sides of the road as the funeral procession proceeded to the crematorium a kilometre away. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Balasure MP Pratap Chandra Sarangi were among those who accompanied Tanuj from his home to the crematorium.

Amid chants of "Jai Hind" and "Prashant Satpathy Amar Rahe", young Tanuj lit the pyre, a sight that seared the consciousness of everyone who was watching, whether in Ishani or on their mobile and television screens. The Satpathy family's story found tragic echo in many other parts of the country.

In Jaipur, the flower-bedecked bier of 33-year-old Neeraj Udhvani made its way



Rajasthan deputy CM Diya Kumari pays tribute to Neeraj Udhvani, who was killed in the Pahalgam terror attack PTI

down a quiet street with mourners walking silently behind and lining the streets.

The chartered accountant had come from Dubai to attend a wedding and on an impulse decided to holiday in Kashmir. As his elder brother Kishore lit the funeral pyre at Moksh Dham in Jhalana, his wife

Ayushi fought back her tears. He was shot dead right in front of her eyes.

The funeral was attended by large crowds. Political lines blurred as Rajasthan Governor Haribhau Bagade, Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma, Union minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat as well as state

Congress chief Govind Singh Dotasra among others visited Udhvani's Model Town residence. A woman in the crowd spoke out loudly. "This is your government's failure. What is the point of deploying security here now?" In response, Shekhawat was seen standing with folded hands, acknowledging the grief and anger of the people.

Gujarat saw three funerals - Yatish Parmar and his son Smit from Bhavnagar city and Shailesh Kalathiya, a resident of Surat. Everywhere, local residents and political bigwigs joined the families, an outpouring of grief and anger that united them all. Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, who reached Bhavnagar on Wednesday night, paid floral tributes to Yatish and Smit Parmar at their residence in the Kaliyabid area before the bodies were taken for cremation on Thursday morning.

In Surat, Union minister CR Paatil along with Gujarat Minister of State for Home Harsh Sanghavi were among the dignitaries who paid floral tributes to Kalathiya.

And in Hathipur village in Uttar Pradesh's Kanpur district, 31-year-old businessman Shubham Dwivedi was given a tearful sendoff with full state honours.

PIONEER IN SHORT

Massive anti-Naxal operation underway

Over 10,000 security personnel, including CRPF, Telangana, and Chhattisgarh police forces, are engaged in a major operation against Maoists in the forests along the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border. The ongoing assault, which began on Monday, aims to neutralise top Maoist commander Hidma and has led to the deaths of three female Naxals so far. The operation, involving around 5,000 troops, is being led by CRPF's CoBRA battalion and supported by helicopters, drones, and satellite surveillance. With over 60 hours of intense firefighting, the operation is one of the largest launched this year, as part of the government's goal to end Left Wing Extremism by 2026.

FULL REPORT ON P4

Delhi traders call bandh over Pahalgam attack

Trade bodies including the Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI) and the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) have called a bandh in Delhi on Friday to protest the Pahalgam terror attack. The shutdown, supported by over 100 markets and merchant associations, is intended as a peaceful tribute to the victims. A candle march was held Thursday at Connaught Place, where traders wore black armbands in solidarity. Key markets like Chandni Chowk, Sadar Bazar, Rajouri Garden, and Jama Masjid will remain closed. BJP MP Praveen Khandelwal emphasised it as a symbol of unity, not protest. Nationwide, civil groups also condemned the killings.

FULL REPORT ON P3

BJP stages torch march against Pahalgam terror attack

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

In a strong show of protest against the terrorist attack on Hindu tourists in Pahalgam, Jammu & Kashmir, senior leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) joined a torch march organized by the Bhopal district unit of the party on Thursday evening.

BJP State President and Khajuraho MP Vishnu Dutt Sharma, State General Secretary (Organization) Hitanand Ji, and Bhopal District President Ravindra Yati participated in the march, which commenced from Nanke Petrol Pump in New Market and proceeded on foot to Roshanpura Square.

At Roshanpura, leaders and participants expressed out-

At Roshanpura, leaders and participants expressed outrage against the terrorist attack and observed a two-minute silence

rage against the terrorist attack and observed a two-minute silence in memory of the deceased, paying heartfelt tributes to the victims.

Speaking during the march, BJP State President Vishnu Dutt Sharma said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India will deliver a decisive blow to terrorism. He termed the attack on Hindu pilgrims in Pahalgam as a cowardly assault on the soul of India, asserting that such acts will not be tolerated. "The entire nation stands united in protest against this attack, and under Prime Minister

Modi's leadership, terrorists will not be spared," Sharma said.

Bhopal District President Ravindra Yati echoed these sentiments, stating that Prime Minister Modi has made it clear that the end of terrorism in India is imminent. He added that the attack in Pahalgam was not just on innocent civilians but on India's sovereignty, and that the torch march was Bhopal's message of solidarity and support for the Prime Minister's firm stance against terrorism.

A large number of BJP leaders and workers participated

in the torch march. Among the prominent attendees were State Minister Vishwas Sarang, State Vice President Seema Singh, State General Secretary and MLA Bhagwandas Sabnani, MLA Rameshwar Sharma, Mayor Malti Rai, State Minister Rahul Kothari, former MLA Dhruvanarayan Singh, Pradeep Tripathi, Municipal Corporation Chairman Kishan Suryavanshi, Bhakti Sharma, Heerendra Bahadur Singh, Sunil Pandey, Manoj Rathore, Ram Bansal Renwal, Jagdish Yadav, District Media In-Charge Rajendra Gupta, BJYM District President Ajay Aditar, Ravi Sharma, Dr. Yogendra Mukhariya, and many more Mandal presidents, councillors, and office bearers.

The event witnessed massive

participation by party workers, marking a collective demand for justice and a strong message against terrorism.

The torch march not only reflected public anger and grief over the Pahalgam attack but also served as a symbolic call for national unity and action against terrorism. Party leaders emphasized that such initiatives would continue across the state to keep the spotlight on national security and to ensure that the sacrifices of innocent victims do not go in vain.

The BJP leadership reiterated its commitment to supporting the central government's tough stance on terrorism and ensuring that those responsible face the harshest punishment under the law.



BJP State President VD Sharma, BJP MLAs Rameshwar Sharma, Bhagwan Das Sabnani and party workers during a candle march to protest against the Pahalgam terrorist attack, in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

Key Jaipur blast conspiracy accused Firoz transferred

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Under tight security arrangements, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Thursday morning escorted Firoz alias Sabzi, a key accused in the 2022 Jaipur bomb blast conspiracy, from Bhopal Central Jail to Jaipur for further interrogation and legal proceedings.

Firoz, who had been lodged in a high-security cell at Bhopal Central Jail for the past 20 days, was considered a prime suspect in the case. He served as the treasurer of the banned organization Al Sufa, which is alleged to have played a central role in orchestrating the 2022 Jaipur blast plot.

Firoz was arrested on April 3 by Ratlam police, following

months of tracking by the NIA. A reward of Rs 5 lakh had been declared for information leading to his capture. His arrest is being viewed as a major breakthrough in the ongoing investigation into the attempted terror attack.

He was apprehended while visiting his sister Rehana in Ratlam to celebrate Eid. Rehana is married to Masroof Khan, brother of BJP Minority Morcha district president Mansoor Jamadar, who resides in the front portion of the same house. Firoz had been frequently changing locations and at times used a burqa to evade detection. Authorities are currently probing the role of his son and nephew in aiding his concealment.

The case dates back to March 30, 2022, when Rajasthan

police intercepted a suspicious vehicle in Nimbahera. Upon searching, they discovered explosives, timers, and batteries, leading to the arrest of Ratlam residents Zuber Pathan, Saifullah Khan, and Altamash. Interrogations subsequently revealed the names of other conspirators, including Amin Phawada, Amin Haji, Mazhar, Imran Pathan, Yunus Saki, Imran Matka, Aqib Maharashtra, and Firoz alias Sabzi.

Following this, the NIA arrested 10 individuals, but Firoz had managed to remain at large until his arrest earlier this month. His interrogation is expected to yield critical insights into the larger terror network and significantly aid efforts to dismantle the remaining elements of the conspiracy.

ED court rejects bail pleas of Saurabh, associates

Bhopal: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) court on Thursday rejected the bail applications of former RTO constable Saurabh Sharma, his associate Sharad Jaiswal, and their company Aviral Fisheries. The decision was delivered by Special Judge Sachin Kumar Ghosh, following a hearing held on Wednesday in the presence of Saurabh's mother Uma Sharma and members of the ED legal team.

Advocate Deepesh Joshi appeared on behalf of Saurabh Sharma, while Rajneesh Bariya represented Sharad Jaiswal. The ED's counsel, Vikram Singh, strongly opposed the bail pleas, citing the seriousness of the financial offenses under investigation. Joshi, however, argued that the ED's claims were unsubstantiated and lacked concrete evidence.

The case revolves around a

major seizure of cash and gold from an Innova vehicle found in a Bhopal forest, which the ED alleges is linked to Saurabh Sharma. Joshi refuted the claim, asserting that the vehicle is not registered in Saurabh's name and that the connection is speculative. He further criticized the ED for alleging that Saurabh owns a villa worth Rs 150 crore in Dubai, stating the claim is based solely on a promotional brochure, with no documentary evidence to prove ownership or even the property's existence.

Joshi also highlighted that Saurabh had previously been granted bail by the Lokayukta, and argued that the ED's pursuit lacked legal foundation. Earlier, on April 9, the same court had granted bail to Saurabh's mother Uma Sharma, wife Divya Sharma, brother-in-law Vinay Aswani, and Rohit Tiwari on a Rs 10 lakh bond.

Over 29L revenue cases resolved under Mega Campaign 3.0

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav has said that Madhya Pradesh is an agriculture-based state. The growing practice of burning crop residue (narwai) after harvest is causing severe environmental damage, including air pollution and degradation of soil quality. Burning stubble destroys essential nutrients in the soil, reducing its fertility. To address this issue, the state government has already banned the burning of crop residue. Despite this, if any farmer is found burning narwai, they will be denied the benefits under the Chief Minister Kisan Kalyan Yojana. Additionally, their crops will not be procured at the Minimum Support Price (MSP) during the following year. Yadav issued these directives during a review meeting of the Revenue

Department held at Samatva Bhavan (Chief Minister's residence). He emphasized that this decision will be implemented from 1st May, keeping in view environmental protection, soil conservation, and sustaining land productivity.

He directed officials to launch strict campaigns to remove encroachments on government lands, wells, stepwells, ponds, and public pathways in villages. Revenue officials must play an active role in the "Jal Ganga Sanvardhan Abhiyan" by protecting and promoting all water bodies. All Amrit Sarovars, ponds, dams, canals, and other water structures should be mandatorily recorded in revenue documents, and encroachments must be removed completely. He also ordered timely resolution of revenue-related cases such as land transfers and partitions, and prioritised resolution of land acquisition cases related to Central and State projects. Officers must conduct regular inspections of subordinate revenue courts to ensure timely case resolution.

Dr Yadav stated that all departments, including Revenue, are moving rapidly toward digitalization, significantly benefiting citizens. The innovative Cyber Tehsil project is a key step in this direction, which has been appreciated by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi through the "Prime Minister's Excellence Award." So far, over 1.56 lakh cases have been resolved under Cyber Tehsil 1.0 and over 1.19 lakh under 2.0. In Cyber Tehsil 3.0, 7 lakh cases related to land transfer, partition, correction of records, maps, and demarcation were recorded up to January 26, 2025. More than 80 lakh pending cases were resolved in the first two phases. Dr. Yadav stressed expediting the resolution of pending revenue cases.

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A massive fire breaks out in the premises of Madhya Pradesh Water and Land Management Institute (WALMI) in Bhopal on Thursday. WALMI is an autonomous training institute, working as a part of Panchayat and the Rural Development Department, Govt. of MP. Pioneer photo

Fire engulfs over 30 acres near Kaliyasot dam

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

A massive fire broke out near the Kaliyasot Dam in Bhopal on Thursday evening, consuming over 30 acres of land and marking the third major fire incident in the city within 24 hours. The blaze erupted around the 13-shutter area of the dam, close to the Water and Land Management Institute (WALMI), and quickly spread across dry vegetation, fuelled by the intense summer heat.

Flames and thick smoke were visible from a distance, alarming residents and institutions in the surrounding areas, including WALMI, Danish Hills, and Jagran Lakecity University. Panic spread briefly in nearby neighborhoods as the fire continued to advance rapidly.

Kolar Fire Station's fire safety in-charge Pankaj Khare

stated that fire tenders were deployed to the site around 5:30 PM, and more than a dozen fire vehicles and water tankers were engaged in containing the flames. Speaking at 9:30 PM, Khare described the operation as "challenging but under control," adding that at least one more hour would be needed to fully extinguish the fire.

While officials confirmed that the area does not fall under the jurisdiction of the forest department, it lies entirely within WALMI's property. However, concerns remain high, as the affected zone is part of a known tiger movement corridor, raising ecological alarms.

Bhopal Collector Kaushalendra Vikram Singh and WALMI Director Sarita Bala Om Prajapati arrived at the scene to oversee response efforts. SDM Kolar Ravi

Shankar Rai reported that five families living near the danger zone were evacuated as a precautionary measure. Khare also noted that fencing in the area hampered firefighting operations, making it difficult for vehicles to access certain parts of the burning terrain.

While the exact cause of the fire remains undetermined, officials refrained from speculating. However, locals familiar with the region suggest that human involvement cannot be ruled out and have called for a thorough investigation.

No injuries or casualties have been reported, but environmental experts have voiced concern over the severe ecological impact, stressing the urgent need for enhanced fire preparedness, stricter monitoring, and protection of Bhopal's vulnerable green belts.

BHEL Bhopal enhances infrastructure

Bhopal: A significant addition to the infrastructure at BHEL Bhopal was marked by the inauguration of a state-of-the-art Automated Vertical Carousel Machine in SCR division. The event was graced by P.K. Upadhyay, General Manager & Head, BHEL Bhopal.

Senior dignitaries including A. Aurangabadkar, GM (WEX & MOD), R.K. Agarwal, GM (SOM), Hem Ram Patel, GM (SCR) and Dilip Kumar, AGM (SWM, REM & FWX) graced the occasion with their valuable presence. The inauguration witnessed the active participation of all Departmental Heads and representatives from SCR, FCX, MOD, EMX & CMX highlighting the collective commitment towards modernization and efficiency enhancement.

Union President (CITU) Lokendra Singh Shekhawat along with other Union and Shop Council Representatives were also present symbolizing strong collaboration between Management and Workforce.

Massive fire breaks out at BHEL premises in Bhopal, shares drop by over 1 per cent

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

A major fire broke out on Thursday afternoon at the premises of Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) in Bhopal, triggering swift emergency response efforts. Fortunately, no casualties or property damage have been reported so far.

The fire erupted around 12 noon near Gate No. 9 of the BHEL campus. According to initial reports, the blaze spread rapidly due to dry vegetation and scrap materials in the vicinity.

Firefighting units from BHEL were immediately deployed, and additional fire tenders from the Bhopal Municipal Corporation were dispatched to assist in controlling the flames. Continuous efforts were underway to douse the fire, with officials expecting it to be fully brought under control within a couple of hours.

Speaking to the media, Additional DCP (Zone 2) Mahavir Singh Mujalade stated that the affected site is within a fenced, non-residential part of the campus, where plantation work had

been carried out. The presence of dry grass and bushes enabled the flames to spread quickly.

Bhopal Collector Kaushalendra Vikram Singh, who visited the site, said that a spark likely triggered the fire in an area where scrap materials and dry foliage were present. He confirmed that the fire was isolated from both residential and industrial units, minimizing any larger threat. Authorities are monitoring the situation closely to ensure it does not escalate.

While the cause of the fire is yet to be formally confirmed, officials have ruled out any immediate danger to surrounding structures or the workforce. A full assessment and safety inspection will follow once the fire is completely extinguished.

Notably, the shares of Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) dropped over 1 per cent on April 24 after a massive fire broke out at the premises of its Bhopal unit. Notably, the company's Bhopal plant is among the oldest heavy electrical equipment manufacturing plants in the country.

JP staffers get partial salary relief

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Following months of protests and a visit by MLA Bhagwandas Sabnani, outsourced employees at JP Hospital received two months of pending salaries on Thursday, confirmed union leader Mrinali Singh Sengar.

The payout brought limited relief, as employees said the majority of their dues from the outsourcing company remain unsettled. "This is just a 25% relief. We are burdened with four months' worth of debt and still need further support," said one worker.

The union raised concerns about wage deductions and irregularities in benefit payments. According to the union, Rs 1,000 was deducted from each employee's salary for uniforms and staff accessories—charges reportedly introduced for the first time. They termed the deduction unjust and demanded immediate rectification.

More serious, the union said, is the longstanding issue of Provident Fund defaults. "All the contractors have misappropriated workers' PF. Between 2015 and 2019, Soddhya Agency disappeared with one year's PF. After that, the second contractor, Pratham, also failed to deposit PF

AIIMS organises annual dissection competition for 1st year students

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

The Department of Anatomy of AIIMS Bhopal successfully organized the Annual Dissection Competition for first-year MBBS students. In this competition, students were divided into different groups and given the opportunity to perform scientific dissections on assigned parts of the human body. Dissection refers to the careful opening of the human body to study its internal organs, nerves, muscles, and structures. It is an essential process in medical education, allowing students to directly understand the structure and functioning of the human body.

Three faculty members from other departments were invited to serve as judges, and the winning teams were selected based on the combined scores awarded by them.

The team that secured the first position this year comprised Amina Arif, Devansh Chaurasia, Kanhaiya, Mrinimayee Yogesh, Priyansh Chittora, Salman Ahmad, Srijan Kumar, and Utkarsh Mahadev. The second-place team included Abhay Gupta,

Anshika Singh, Gaurav Agrawal, Lav Shukla, Nayan Pandey, Ramesh Kumar, Svarnik Sharma, Swaroop Muralidhar, and Vikas Prajapati. The students who secured the third position were Agwal Shivam, Ayush Rai, Harsh Dhakad, Waqar Yunus, Patil Sarth, Rishi Kumar, Shivam Yadav, and Tanisha Singhal. The efforts of all participating students were commendable. It was also decided by the department that the best anatomical specimen created during the competition would be displayed in the departmental museum to provide academic benefit to other students as well.

On this occasion, Prof. (Dr.) Ajai Singh awarded the winning teams and addressed the students, saying, "Such academic events not only deepen students' understanding of the subject but also significantly enhance their professional competence. This competition is an impactful step towards improving the quality of medical education. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all body donors whose invaluable contributions are enabling our students to gain practical knowledge."



Muslim cleric addresses the Save Waqf Conference under the banner of All India Muslim Personal Law Board in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

Madhya Pradesh Governor called on by Acharya Prashant

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Acharya Prashant, noted philosopher and founder of the Prashant Advait Foundation, met Madhya Pradesh Governor Mangubhai Patel at Raj Bhavan on Thursday. The meeting focused on the dissemination of Indian philosophy, particularly Vedanta and the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, and their relevance in contemporary society.

During the discussion, Acharya Prashant emphasized the impor-

ance of communicating traditional Indian wisdom to today's youth through modern platforms, including cinema and public dialogues. He highlighted recent presentations conducted in Bhopal at PVR Cinemas, Einox, and the National Institute of Technology (NIT), where he engaged audiences with ideas rooted in Vedanta in a relatable and accessible format.

Governor Shri Mangubhai Patel commended Acharya Prashant's efforts, describing them as a

valuable initiative to spiritually enrich future generations. He noted that presenting Sanatan Dharma in a modern and engaging context would help foster a deeper cultural and philosophical connection among the youth.

The Prashant Advait Foundation has been actively involved in promoting Indian philosophical thought, and Acharya Prashant's work continues to inspire awareness, wisdom, and intellectual clarity in young minds across the country.

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Ensure at least one employment opportunity for every family: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has stated that through micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), it is possible to provide employment or self-employment opportunities to at least one member of every family. Activities should be expanded based on the specific conditions and available skills of each district.

Dr. Yadav emphasised that entrepreneurship should expand uniformly across the state by connecting youth with micro-industries like traditional oil mills, spice and flour mills, and millet processing units for crops like kodo and kutki. Food processing units can play a crucial role in this initiative. Agricultural produce markets are also being modernised, with facilities for the safe storage of

milk, vegetables, and other perishables, starting from Ratlam. These directives were given by Chief Minister Dr. Yadav during a review meeting of the Department of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises held at Samatva Bhavan (Chief Minister's Residence). The meeting was attended by Minister Chaitanya Kumar Kashyap, Principal Secretary Raghendra Singh, Principal Secretary Finance Manish Rastogi, and other officials.

Dr. Yadav said that MSMEs play a key role in realising the vision of a Developed India—Developed Madhya Pradesh. Promoting entrepreneurship at the micro level is especially crucial. Currently, Madhya Pradesh ranks 7th in the country in the MSME sector, and the aim is to bring it among the top states by next year. To achieve this goal, a

time-bound action plan will be implemented focusing on Better financial and infrastructural support for MSMEs, strengthening self-employment schemes and the startup ecosystem, and promoting marketing, exports & e-commerce platforms.

Dr. Yadav announced that 2025 is being observed as the "Year of Industry and Employment" in Madhya Pradesh. Industry-Employment Days will be organised in various regions of the state every two months. It is essential to sustain traditional production activities like power looms. Regional camps will be organised for skill upgradation and improving technical competencies with the help of experts.

The Chief Minister stressed the importance of encouraging new entrepreneurs. Successful entrepreneurs who have

excelled through their own initiatives and innovations should be showcased as role models to inspire others.

Dr. Yadav congratulated the Madhya Pradesh Small Industries Corporation for winning the Gold Medal at the India International Trade Fair held in New Delhi. He also said that Vikramotsav in Ujjain has significantly boosted trade and business at the regional level. He instructed that a study be conducted in areas where trade fairs can be organised, and an integrated plan should be made to implement these activities.

The key discussions in the Meeting were that Madhya Pradesh has 17.55 lakh registered MSME units, attracting investments worth Rs 55,000 crore, providing employment to over 92 lakh people. There are 5,300 startups in the state, with over 2,500 led by women. An

amount of Rs 1,475 crore from the supplementary budget has been used to clear all pending MSME subsidies till March 2025. Gwalior Trade Fair 2025 witnessed Rs 3,327 crore worth of business.

To inform investors about land availability, information is being provided through the department's website, with 1,100+ plots available for allocation from May 1. District-level workshops are being held to educate investors about government policies. The Mukhyamantri Udyam Kranti Yojana and Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme have both exceeded their targets. A grand event focused on MSMEs will be held in Indore on June 27 to mark MSME Day. A similar startup-focused event will be organised in Bhopal in September.



Cooperation Minister Vishwas Kailash Sarang visited the site following reports of the fire incident in the BHEL premises and issued necessary directives. Pioneer photo



Members of Bhopal Chemist Association during a candle march to protest against the Pahalgalam terrorist attack, in Bhopal on Thursday. Pioneer photo

Bhopal unites in protest after Pahalgalam terror attack

Bhopal: Bhopal is mourning and seething in equal measure after the brutal terrorist attack in Pahalgalam. The city's traders and community leaders on Thursday responded with visible solidarity and strong words of condemnation.

Wholesale medicine traders wore black armbands while working as a mark of protest. The market—home to nearly 400 wholesale outlets—closed at 6 pm as traders walked in a silent procession towards the Kali Mandir near Puttha Mill, ending with a tribute to the victims.

"Shopkeepers are wearing black armbands while working as a mark of protest," said Jitendra Dhakad, President of the Bhopal Chemist Association. "After closing shops at 6 pm, we will hold a silent rally followed by a tribute ceremony," he said.

The city's response has gone beyond symbolic gestures. The Darul Qaza and Darul Ifta under the Masajid Committee issued a sharp statement condemning the attack, calling it "an act that has shamed all of humanity". They offered condolences on behalf of the Muslim community and appealed to the Prime Minister and Home Minister to "take strict action against those responsible".

The All India Ulema Board took an unflinching stance. Its President, Qazi Syed Anas Ali, said, "Whoever kills an innocent soul is akin to having killed all of humanity." He condemned the terrorist organisations and Pakistan, demanding "a complete boycott of Pakistan by the Indian government".

He added, "Terrorism has no connection with Islam," and urged citizens to "stand united

against terrorism and express support for the families of the martyrs". Haji Mohammad Imran, Secretary of the Madhya Pradesh Sarvadhama Sadbhavna Manch, echoed the anger. "It was not only an attack on innocent civilians but on all of humanity." He called for "stringent action against the terrorists".

Meanwhile, a protest against the Waqf Amendment Act planned for Friday has been postponed, organiser Shahrukh Pathan said. He too condemned the Pahalgalam attack, calling it "an act of cowardice". "Attacking tourists is extremely unfortunate," he said. "We extend our deepest condolences to all the injured and deceased." Across the city, voices continue to speak in one tone—grief for the dead, and a call for unity, vigilance and justice in the face of terror.

BMC removes encroachments in the city

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

In a citywide anti-encroachment operation, Bhopal Municipal Corporation on Thursday cleared obstructions to the Metro project and demolished illegal constructions across multiple locations.

Following CM Helpline complaints and routine monitoring, the civic team razed six houses in Arjun Nagar that were stalling Metro work. Illegal platforms, stalls, and boundary walls were also removed.

Eight concrete pillars, a staircase, and a boundary wall near Father Agnel School on New Jail Road were demolished. Paver blocks and shop goods on drains were also cleared.

Encroachments in Ashoka Garden, Karond 80 Ft Road, Subzi Mandi, New Market, Danish Kunj, and over 20 other areas were targeted. Seized items included pushcarts, tarpaulins, tables, and signboards.

The corporation warned violators against re-encroachment. Repeat offences, officials said, would invite stricter legal action under Commissioner Harendra Narayan's directions.

Meanwhile, the district administration took parallel action in Rasuliya Gosai and Sikandarabad. JCB machines were pressed into action to demolish illegal structures in these unauthorised colonies after police-backed investigation and SDM-level orders.

UP delegation visits community kitchens, plans to adopt scheme

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

During a visit to Deendayal Rasoi Kendras in the state capital on Thursday, Uttar Pradesh officials praised the Rs 5 meal scheme and expressed interest in replicating it in their state.

A team from UP State Urban Livelihood Mission visited Rasoi centres at Shahjehani Park and Putlighar bus stand to study their operations and implementation.

They reviewed how the centres serve nutritious meals to the poor for Rs 5, with support from the state government and strict monitoring through a dedicated online portal.

Dr Kamal Kumar Singh, UP mission manager, took a token

and personally ate lunch at the Putlighar centre, describing the food as clean, homely, and well-managed.

Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC) Additional Commissioner Tina Yadav, explained the process of food preparation, service, sanitation, and digital beneficiary registration to members of the delegation.

Singh highlighted the portal's role in tracking meals and ensuring government subsidies reach operating agencies based on verified daily entries.

Calling the Rasoi model transparent and impactful, he lauded the state's innovation and said similar centres could soon be seen in cities across Uttar Pradesh.

Annual AIZWV and International Wildlife Conference opens

PNS ■ Jabalpur

The 15th Annual Conference of the All India Zoo and Wildlife Veterinarians (AIZWV) and an International Conference on wildlife conservation and health was inaugurated at the Veterinary College auditorium, Civil Lines, Jabalpur, under the joint auspices of the School of Wildlife and Forensic Health, Nanaji Deshmukh Veterinary Science University, the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department, and the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun.

A moment of silence was observed in memory of the victims of the recent Pahalgalam massacre, reflecting collective grief and solidarity. The organizing committee felicitated the dignitaries with shawls, saplings, and mementoes as tokens of welcome.

In his welcome address, Dean Dr. R.K. Sharma introduced the conference and extended his gratitude to the attendees. Delivering the keynote, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Mandeep Sharma, the conference's chief patron, emphasized the relevance of the event's theme. He expressed that such scientific conferences are vital in today's context for wildlife conservation and highlighted the importance of preventing wildlife diseases.

The inauguration ceremony began with the traditional lighting of the lamp before the idol of Goddess Saraswati, led by chief guest Dr. Umesh Chandra Sharma, President of the Veterinary Council of India; guest of honour MLA Ashok Rohani; Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Mandeep Sharma; PCCF (Head of Forest Force) Aseem Srivastava; PCCF Wildlife Shubhbranjana Sen; AIZWV's Dr. Apoorv Chakravarty; Dean of Veterinary College Dr. R.K. Sharma; and Conference Convener Dr. Shobha Jaware.

Additional Commissioner Tina Yadav, explained the process of food preparation, service, sanitation, and digital beneficiary registration to members of the delegation.

Singh highlighted the portal's role in tracking meals and ensuring government subsidies reach operating agencies based on verified daily entries.

Calling the Rasoi model transparent and impactful, he lauded the state's innovation and said similar centres could soon be seen in cities across Uttar Pradesh.

He encouraged knowledge exchange between Indian and international delegates and expressed confidence that the conference would contribute significantly to future conservation efforts.

MLA Ashok Rohani congratulated the organizers and noted the importance of hosting such a prestigious event in Jabalpur, home to one of India's leading veterinary universities. He hoped

the conference would generate new insights for wildlife protection.

In his address, Dr. Umesh Chandra Sharma emphasized the need to balance human and environmental well-being, referring to the "Best and East" theory—where "Best" signifies humanity and "East" symbolizes nature. He called for enhanced capacity building for veterinarians, stronger integration of traditional Indian knowledge with modern conservation strategies, and positioning veterinarians at the forefront of public health efforts. He recommended that the conference's outcomes be submitted to government and council bodies for policy development.

PCCF Aseem Srivastava praised the university's longstanding partnership with the Forest Department and its significant role in advancing wildlife conservation in Madhya Pradesh. PCCF Wildlife Shubhbranjana Sen commended the organizing team and remarked that the conference would be instrumental in promoting the One Health approach, which links environmental, animal, and human health.

IT conclave scheduled in Indore on April 27

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

An IT Industry Conclave will be held in Indore on April 27, and an Agriculture Conclave is scheduled for Mandasaur on May 3 to promote investment in industries and strengthen the agricultural sector.

Dr. Yadav stated that the government runs numerous welfare schemes to boost agriculture and enhance farmers' prosperity.

Significant decisions have been taken to increase farmers' income through advanced crop practices and animal husbandry.

The state government is also working to relieve farmers from the burden of electricity bills by providing solar pumps. The upcoming Agriculture Conclave aims to encourage farmers to learn about modern farming technologies and draw inspiration from agricultural innova-

tions.

The government is making every possible effort to make farming more profitable and to increase farmers' income. A prosperous farmer leads to a prosperous Madhya Pradesh and a stronger nation. The state government remains firmly committed to the welfare of youth, women, and farmers, Dr. Yadav conveyed in his message released to the media on Thursday.

District Panchayat protest ends after Collector's assurance on water crisis

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

An indefinite hunger strike by District Panchayat members in Bhopal over incomplete tap water schemes was called off after Collector Kaushalendra Vikram Singh promised swift resolution on Thursday evening.

Vice President Mohan Singh Jat and members Vinay Mehar, Chandresh Rajput, Devkunwar Hada, along with Suresh Rajput, Anil Hada, and Vinod Rajoriya began the strike earlier in the day at the Panchayat office.

The group launched the protest citing government inaction on incomplete water supply schemes amid an intense heat-wave. Jat had informed the Collector about the protest four days in advance.

Officials were thrown into disarray and spent Wednesday night attempting to convince the elected representatives to withdraw their plans. Their efforts

failed, and the protest went ahead.

The crisis stems from unresolved tap water projects across villages in Bhopal district. The issue was raised earlier in the Panchayat meeting, but the Public Health Engineering department did not act.

Speaking to The Pioneer, Vinay Mehar said, "the strike is a protest against Public Health Engineering officers and contractors who have usurped crores in government funds meant for the rural tap water scheme."

"We are also seeking immediate relief for residents in villages who are facing acute water shortage due to non functioning taps," he added.

The affected villages include Khajuri, Gunga, Shahpura, Kalapeepal, Taraisewaniya, Acharpura, and Parwalia, the protesters said. The two sides will now meet for discussions at the Panchayat office on Friday afternoon.

Rabies death, missing child expose crisis of homeless

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

A rabies death and a missing girl have exposed the harsh realities of the homeless in the city, who often remain invisible until tragedy forces notice.

On the night of 6 April, a six-year-old girl went missing from beneath a bridge on Bhopal's Airport Road, where she had been sleeping beside her mother. The family, part of the nomadic Banjara community, has no home but a corner under the concrete structure.

The incident came to light days after Bablu Rana, a 32-year-old labourer, died of rabies after being bitten by a stray dog. He lived under the Singarcholi Bridge. Symptoms had shown for weeks—fear of water, strange sounds. His wife, Sunita, and her two small children stayed

By the end of February, the homeless are back under bridges, on pavements, and by roadside drains—unnoticed, unprotected, and ultimately unaccounted for, as they often lack the paperwork required to establish their identity

by his corpse for hours before help arrived.

Both incidents highlight the plight of the homeless in the city, who only attract attention when tragedy strikes. During winter, municipal teams often sweep through the city, bundling up the homeless into night shelters. But as spring sets in, these efforts quietly die down.

By the end of February, the homeless are back under bridges, on pavements, and by roadside drains—unnoticed, unprotected, and ultimately unaccounted

for, as they often lack the paperwork required to establish their identity.

In the girl's case, police say they are examining CCTV footage from nearby entry and exit points. In Bablu's case, police registered a case after his death, and a post-mortem was conducted. Sunita is now alone with two children and no roof above her head. The two cases warrant more than police action—they deserve answers from those responsible for the homeless in the city.

'Blackout' to protest Waqf Amendment Act today

STAFF REPORTER ■ Bhopal

The state leadership of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board on Thursday appealed to Muslims across the state to switch off the lights in their homes and shops on Friday, from 9:00 to 9:30 pm.

The decision was taken after a meeting of the Tahaffuz-e-Auqaf Committee, chaired by Arif Masood, the state coordinator of the organisation, and attended by ulemas, representatives of religious organisations, and members of the Muslim Personal Law Board from across the state. The primary agenda of the meeting was to devise a strategy to oppose the Waqf Amendment Act.

As an initial step in the protest, a call was made for Muslims throughout the state to observe a symbolic blackout.

Speaking during the meeting, Arif Masood stated that the new Waqf Act constitutes a

The decision was taken after a meeting of the Tahaffuz-e-Auqaf Committee, chaired by Arif Masood

direct assault on the religious and social heritage of the Muslim community and would not be agreeable under any circumstances. He further added that, under the directives of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, phased protests would be organised throughout Madhya Pradesh.

The meeting was attended by several prominent religious leaders, including Maulana Mohammad Ahmed, President of Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind (Madhya Pradesh); Dr Shahid, Deputy Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind; Shia cleric Maulana Syed Azhar Hussain Rizvi; and Maulana Syed Azhar Hussain, among others.

Woman ends life

Bhopal: A 26-year-old woman, identified as Anju Yadav committed suicide in an apparent in the Shyam Nagar locality under Habibganj police station on Wednesday night. According to police, Anju was the wife of Anand Yadav, who works at a clothing store. She was a homemaker and lived with her husband in Shyam Nagar. At the time of the incident, she was reportedly alone at home.



I, hitherto known as Padmanabham Gautam S/o Gyanendra Prasad Gautam R/o 317 Gh, Gram Post Rajgarh, Rajgarh, Rewa, Madhya Pradesh 486448 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Nitin Gautam.

PD(1927)C

Sharp drop in Malaria deaths, but gaps in rural access remain a concern

KISHAN SINGH RANA ■ Bhopal

The fight against malaria has gained remarkable ground in recent years, with only six deaths reported between 2019 and 2024 in Madhya Pradesh. As the country edges closer to its target of eliminating malaria by 2030, the focus now shifts to strengthening healthcare infrastructure and improving early detection.

Observed every year on April 25, World Malaria Day highlights global efforts to tackle the disease. In Bhopal, small-scale awareness programmes will be conducted across all 21 zones, supported by ASHA and com-

munity health workers. This year's theme, "Malaria Ends With Us: Reinvest, Reimagine," underscores the city's ongoing efforts to control the disease.

Malaria, a potentially life-threatening illness, is caused by parasites—Plasmodium vivax, P falciparum, P malariae, and P ovale—transmitted through the bite of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes. Despite being curable, malaria often goes undiagnosed in its early stages due to non-specific symptoms such as fever, chills, and body aches, which are frequently mistaken for viral infections.

Dr Pranjal Khare, a specialist in malaria control, said Bhopal's

malaria team actively monitors all 85 wards and coordinates with municipal officials for regular fogging operations. In the last few years, 15 malaria-prone hotspots have been identified and targeted awareness campaigns launched.

The State Annual Health Report notes that from 2019 to March 2024, more than 31.8 million malaria cases were identified, but only six fatalities were recorded. While this marks a significant achievement, experts caution that malaria-related deaths still occur, especially due to delays in diagnosis and treatment. P falciparum, in particular, can lead to severe complications

such as cerebral malaria, seizures, coma, and multi-organ failure. Pregnant women and young children remain especially vulnerable.

Challenges persist, especially in rural areas where access to healthcare is limited. Poor communication infrastructure and medicine shortages further delay timely care. In Bhopal, the official telephone line of the District Jaypee Hospital and the District Malaria Office have reportedly been non-functional for over a year, raising concerns about accessibility.

To bridge the awareness gap, June is observed as Malaria Month across India, with health camps held in every dis-

trict. Dr Khare stressed that while malaria is completely curable when treated promptly, patients often ignore early symptoms, increasing the risk of complications.

The ambitious goal of malaria elimination by 2030 is within reach, but the path forward demands not only sustained public health efforts but also a serious commitment to improving healthcare delivery for the country's most vulnerable. As WHO data reveals, India still accounts for 58% of malaria cases in the South-East Asia Region and 3% of the global burden—figures that highlight the scale of the task ahead.

बैंक ऑफ बड़ोदा Bank of Baroda Kolar Road Branch, Bhopal

DEMAND NOTICE

Notice issued under section 13(2) of Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 Read with Rule 3(1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Whereas the undersigned has issued notice on dates mentioned below in table (sent by regd. Post) under section 13(2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002. r.w. Rule 3(1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 to you and to repay the dues mentioned therein within 60 days from the receipt of the said notice, which were returned undelivered and I have reason to believe that you are avoiding service of demand notice on you. Now, therefore, notice is hereby given to you to repay the banks dues within 60 days from this Notice failing which the recovery shall be made as per rules and we, the secured creditor, shall be entitled to exercise all or any of the rights under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002. read with Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The content of the notice is as under.

Name of the Borrower/ Guarantor	Description of the Secured Assets	Amount Outstanding Demand Notice Date
Borrowers: Mrs Anuradha Tiwari Guarantor: Mr. Alok Tiwari Address of Both: D-3/405 Danish Nagar, Bagh Mugaliya, Hoshangabad Road, Bhopal, M.P. 462026	'Equitable mortgage of property being Plot no. 45, 'Happy Valley', Rajoda Chak, Chandra Khedi, Tehsil-Goharganj, Dist- Raisen, M.P. admeasuring area 1452 Sq ft. and is bounded as under: Boundaries: East Road, North: Plot no. 46, West: Plot no. 40, South: Plot no. 44	Rs 2,20,169/- +interest & other charges 19/04/2025 NPA Date: 18.04.2025

Notice is hereby given to public not to transact / enter into any agreement and to mortgagors not to sell/ transfer the above said secured assets without permission of the bank in terms of sec 13(13) of the act.

Date : 25-04-2025, Place : Bhopal Authorised Officer, Bank of Baroda

PM Modi launches ₹13,500 crore projects in Bihar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

India cannot develop without developing its villages, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday as he launched and inaugurated projects worth ₹13,500 crore in Bihar's Madhubani, and addressed Panchayati Raj Institutions across the country.

Speaking at an event to mark National Panchayati Raj Day here, Modi also lauded the work done by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in the poll-bound state.

He said a developed Bihar is essential for a developed India, and said efforts are being made to ensure the benefits of progress reach all corners of the state.

Modi said Mahatma Gandhi's idea that India cannot be developed without empowering its villages is the concept behind the Panchayati Raj system.

"Bihar is the land where Mahatma Gandhi expanded the mantra of Satyagraha," Modi said, highlighting Mahatma Gandhi's firm belief that "India's rapid development is only possible when its villages are strong".

He said the projects launched on Thursday will boost development and generate employment opportunities in the state.

"Farmers are the backbone of the rural economy, the stronger this backbone, the

stronger the villages, and consequently, the nation," Modi said.

He also underscored that panchayats have strengthened social participation, remarking that Bihar was the first state in the country to provide 50 per cent reservation for women in panchayats.

"Today, a significant number of women from economically weaker sections, Dalits, Mahadalits, backwards, and extremely backward communities are serving as public representatives in Bihar. This is real social justice and democracy," he said.

"Many steps have been taken to strengthen panchayats, and technology has also been used... More than 2 lakh gram panchayats have been linked with the internet, and more than 5.5 lakh common service centres have been established in villages," he said.

Modi said more than 30,000 new panchayat buildings have also been constructed.

He lauded the Bihar government's 'Jeevika Didi' programme and said, today, self-help groups of women in Bihar have been provided financial assistance of approximately ₹1,000 crore.

He said this will further strengthen the economic empowerment of women and contribute to the goal of creating three crore 'Lakhpati Didis' across the country. Modi said villages have seen the con-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi flags-off a Nammo Bharat train launching India's first 16-coach Nammo Bharat Rapid Rail service between Jayanagar and Patna, during a National Panchayati Raj Day event in Madhubani, Thursday

struction of houses for the poor, roads, gas connections, water connections, and toilets, bringing lakhs of crores of rupees to rural areas.

"The last decade has been a decade of infrastructure development for India," said the prime minister, asserting that this modern infrastructure is strengthening the

foundation of a developed India.

Talking about the steps taken by the Union government, he said more than 10,000 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs and more than 800 Jan Aushadhi Kendras have come up in Bihar, due to which around ₹2,000 crore of out-of-pocket medical expenses were saved.

He also mentioned the AIIMS being established in Darbhanga.

At the event, where four new trains were also flagged off, Modi noted that metro projects are underway in Patna, and over two dozen cities across the country are now connected with metro facilities.

He announced the launch of the 'Nammo Bharat Rapid Rail' service between Patna and Jaynagar, which will significantly reduce travel time between the two locations, and emphasised that this development will benefit lakhs of people from Samastipur, Darbhanga, Madhubani, and Begusarai.

Modi called floods a "persistent challenge" in the Mithila and Kosi regions, and said the government is set to invest Rs 11,000 crore to mitigate its impact on Bihar.

He said the investment will facilitate the construction of dams on rivers such as Bagmati, Dhar, Budhi Gandak, and Kosi, and canals will be developed, ensuring irrigation arrangements through river water.

He highlighted the Budget announcement of the Makhana Board, which is expected to transform the fortunes of makhana farmers.

The prime minister flagged off four new trains — Amrit Bharat Express between Saharsa and Mumbai, Nammo Bharat Rapid Rail between Jaynagar and Patna and trains

between Pipra and Saharsa and Saharsa and Samastipur.

He also inaugurated the Supaul Pipra Rail Line, Hasanpur Bithan Rail Line and two-lane rail over bridges at Chapra and Bagaha and dedicated to the nation the Khagaria-Alauli Rail Line.

Other projects of which Modi laid the foundation stone included an LPG bottling plant with a rail unloading facility at Hathua in Gopalganj worth around ₹340 crore. He also laid the foundation stone of projects worth over ₹1,170 crore and inaugurated multiple projects worth over ₹5,030 crore in the power sector in Bihar under the revamped distribution sector scheme.

Modi distributed benefits of around Rs 930 crore under the community investment fund to over 2 lakh SHGs from Bihar under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), handed over sanction letters to 15 lakh new beneficiaries of PMAY-Gramin and released instalments to 10 lakh PMAY-G beneficiaries from across the country.

Apart from these, the prime minister presented the Special Category National Panchayat Awards 2025, which include the Climate Action Special Panchayat Award, Atma Nirbhar Panchayat Special Award, and Panchayat Kshamta Nirman Sarvottam Sansthan Puraskar.

Pahalgam terror attack is direct assault on values of our republic: Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Congress on Thursday said the "cowardly" Pahalgam attack has been masterminded by Pakistan and is a direct assault on the "values of our republic", even as it accused the BJP of exploiting the tragedy to promote discord and polarisation at a time when unity is most needed.

The Congress Working Committee (CWC), the highest decision-making body of the party, adopted a resolution expressing its deepest shock and condemnation of the heinous terrorist attack, which claimed the lives of 26 innocent tourists and left more than 20 others grievously injured. "The Congress Working Committee extends its deepest condolences to the bereaved families. It stands with them wholeheartedly in this moment of profound anguish."

"This cowardly and calculated act of terror, masterminded by Pakistan, is a direct assault on the values of our republic. The deliberate targeting of Hindus was done to inflame passions across the country," the party's resolution said.

"We appeal for calm in the face of this grave provocation and reaffirm our collective strength in the face of adversity. The CWC appeals for calm and reaffirms the Indian National Congress' longstanding resolve to combat cross-border terrorism with determination and unity,"

the resolution said.

Reading out the resolution at a press conference, party general secretary K C Venugopal, along with Jairam Ramesh and Pawan Khera, said the CWC also paid tributes to the local ponywalas and tourist guides, one of whom was killed while trying to protect tourists to uphold the idea of India.

Our primary question is only on security lapses and intelligence failure, which are evident. We are expecting an answer from the Government

— KC VENUGOPAL, GENERAL SECRETARY

The CWC said in its resolution that the massacre has rightly drawn condemnation from all political parties in Jammu and Kashmir and from a wide cross-section of its citizens.

"However, it is shocking that the BJP is exploiting this grave tragedy through official and proxy social media platforms to sow further discord, mistrust, polarisation and division at a time when unity and solidarity are most needed," it said. Venugopal said the Congress, being a responsible opposition, asks questions on the security and intelligence failure that led to the terror attack.

"Our primary question is only on security lapses and intelligence failure, which are evident. We are expecting an answer

from the government, let the answer come, and then we will respond," he said. Venugopal also announced that the Congress will hold candle marches across the country on April 25 to pay homage to the victims of the attack and protest against terrorist activities.

The CWC noted that Pahalgam is known to be a heavily guarded area, secured by a three-tier security arrangement and, "It is imperative that a comprehensive analysis is conducted into the intelligence failures and security lapses that enabled such an attack in a Union Territory — an area directly under the purview of the Union Home Ministry."

"These questions must be raised in the larger public interest. This is the only way justice can truly be seen to be served for the families whose lives have been so brutally devastated," the CWC resolution said.

Noting that the Amarnath Yatra is set to commence shortly and lakhs of pilgrims from across India will participate in the annual journey, the CWC said their safety must be treated as a national priority. "Robust, transparent, and proactive security arrangements must be put in place without delay. The safety of pilgrims, as well as the livelihoods of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, many of whom depend on tourism, must be protected with full sincerity and seriousness," the resolution adopted by the CWC said.

Pahalgam attack similar to Hamas strike: Israel envoy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Israel's Ambassador to India, Reuven Azar, on Thursday compared the terrorist attack in Pahalgam to the October 7, 2023, Hamas strike on Israel, citing similarities in their targeting of civilians and warning of growing coordination among terrorist groups.

Drawing parallels to the Hamas-led assault that killed over 1,100 people in Israel, Azar pointed to the deliberate targeting of unarmed civilians in both cases.

His remarks came after terrorists struck at a prime tourist location in Pahalgam in south Kashmir on Tuesday, killing at least 26 civilians, mostly tourists, and injuring several others.

"Unfortunately, we must confess, these terrorist groups are inspiring each other. There are similarities between the Pahalgam attack and what happened on October 7 (2023) in Israel. Innocent tourists were enjoying their vacation in Pahalgam, while in Israel, people were celebrating a music festival," Azar said.

He also linked the Pahalgam attack's timing to the recent visits by Hamas leaders to Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK), where they reportedly met with Jaish-e-Muhammed operatives and a few others, suggesting possible coordination.

The Israeli ambassador also praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

response to the Pahalgam attack, particularly his speech at a gathering in Madhubani, Bihar, on Thursday where he vowed to "hunt down" those responsible for the killings.

"I'm very encouraged by not only the strong condemnation but also the strict measures taken by the Indian government," Azar told PTI Videos, referring to India's diplomatic moves, including the suspension of the Indus Water Treaty of 1960 with Pakistan and immediate shutting down of the Attari land-transit post in view of the cross-border links to the attack in Pahalgam.

Azar also urged the global community to expose the state sponsors of terrorism, emphasising that the problem extends much beyond individual terrorists.

"Terrorism has to be exposed because terrorists enjoy a series of deeds by countries that supply money, intelligence inputs and weapons (to them), which is unacceptable," he said.

Calling for stronger international coordination to curb terrorism, the Israeli diplomat said, "I feel all countries should put restrictions on the capabilities of companies to supply services to the extremist elements."

"Countering terrorism requires not just military action but also efforts to combat incitement. The terrorists are not just using violence. They are inciting violence," he added.

AIIMS Raipur performs its first swap kidney transplant

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The AIIMS Raipur has successfully performed its first swap kidney transplant, making it the first among the newer AIIMS institutions and the first government hospital in Chhattisgarh to carry out this complex and life-saving procedure. The Union Health ministry said swap kidney transplant, which is also known as Kidney Paired Transplant (KPT), can lead to a 15 per cent increase in the number of transplants.

In a swap transplant, a patient with renal failure who has a willing living donor but is unable to receive the kidney due to an incompatible blood group or the presence of HLA antibodies can still undergo a transplant by exchanging donors with another incompatible pair. Through this arrangement, both recipients receive compatible kidneys, resulting in successful transplants for both pairs.

In the case at AIIMS Raipur, two male End Stage Renal Disease patients, aged 39 and 41 from Bilaspur, had been on dialysis for three years, the ministry said in a statement. Both were advised to undergo kidney transplantation. Their respective wives came forward as living donors. However, due to blood group incompatibility direct donation was not possible.

Delhi HC orders attachment of TMC MP Saket Gokhale salary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Thursday ordered the attachment of TMC MP Saket Gokhale's salary in a defamation case filed by former diplomat Lakshmi Puri. Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora observed Gokhale was previously directed to apologise to the former assistant secretary general of the United Nations and pay her ₹50 lakh in damages.

However, the court said, neither did he deposit the fine amount nor offer a reasonable explanation.

"Accordingly, issue warrant of attachment as section 60(i) with respect to salary of the respondent which is stated to be ₹1.90 lakh. The salary shall remain attached until ₹50 lakh is deposited with the court," the court said.

Section 60 of the Code of Civil Procedure stipulates in matters of execution of a decree, the salary of a judgement-debtor can be attached to the extent of the first one thousand rupees and two-third of the remainder.

The court passed the order while dealing with Puri's plea seeking execution of the decree in her favour.

Though Gokhale's plea in relation to a "recall" of the judgement against him was pending before another bench, the court said there was no stay on the present proceedings.

Puri moved the high court in 2021, alleging Gokhale tarnished her good-will and reputation by making reckless and false allegations about her financial affairs in the context of an apartment that she owned in Geneva.

In the July 1, 2024 verdict, aside from directing publication of an apology and payment of ₹50 lakh as damages, the high court restrained Gokhale from publishing any more content on any social media or electronic platform concerning his imputation against Puri.

NHAI starts construction work of six foot over bridges

PARVESH SHARMA ■ Gurugram

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has started the construction work of six foot over bridges (FOBs) on the Delhi-Jaipur National Highway (NH-48). These FOBs will be ready by August in Gurugram and Rewari districts, officials said.

In Gurugram, these FOBs will be built in Rampura, the NSG Campus in Manesar, and the village of Binola.

In Rewari, these FOBs will be built in villages Rathivas, Malpura, and Jaisingh Kheda. Jaisingh Kheda is situated on the border of Haryana and Rajasthan.

NHAI allotted the work of construction of new FOBs on the Delhi-Jaipur Highway to a company in February this year.

This company has been assigned the work of repairing two old FOBs. It will cost around ₹12 crore. Apart from this, the FOBs built in village Sidhrwali and village Kharkhada will be repaired.

NHAI has an FOB near Signature Tower on the Delhi-Jaipur Highway. It is in bad condition due to lack of maintenance. The machine has been stolen from

its escalator. The escalator is in bad condition. Because of this, people have to cross this highway on foot, due to which there is a fear of road accidents.

On the other hand, the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) will construct FOBs near Raheja Mall and CD Chowk on the Gurugram-Sohna Highway, besides Old Delhi Road and Sheela Mata Road.

The construction of these FOBs will cost around ₹16 crore. Lifts and escalators will be constructed in these FOBs. Due to this, people will not face any problem in crossing these roads.

GMDA has decided the location of these FOBs. Construction will start in the next one or two months. On the other hand, GMDA has claimed that the construction work of the FOB under construction in village Narsinghpur will be completed soon.

"The tender for construction of six FOBs on the Delhi-Jaipur Highway has been allotted. Work has started under this. All these FOBs will be constructed within the month of August. Apart from this, two FOBs will also be repaired," Prakash Tiwari, Manager, NHAI, said.

CRPF launches biggest anti-Naxal operations in Chattisgarh, three killed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi/Raipur

In one of the biggest operations, more than 10,000 security personnel apart from back up units are engaged in fire-fight with naxals in jungles of Chattisgarh bordering Telangana and three female naxals have, so far, died. Security teams from both the states besides Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) are engaged in the ongoing action.

It is the biggest offensive launched this year to neutralise most-wanted Maoist Hidma, officials said Thursday. The operation launched from the Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh to Karregutta hills in Mulugu district across the border in Telangana has clocked over 60 hours after it was launched on Monday with close to 5,000 troops apart from backup units. The forces and Maoists were exchanging fire till the fore noon of Thursday and it is expected to continue, they said.

The assault is led by the 210th battalion of CRPF's CoBRA units and has teams from the Chhattisgarh police, its special task force (STF), DRG, some regular

CRPF units and Telangana Police, they said. Around 9:30 am on Thursday, three bodies of female Maoists along with an equal number of weapons has been seized. The operation is continuing, a senior CRPF officer said. Director General (DG) of CRPF G P Singh is monitoring the operation from Raipur and Jagdalpur since April 21, he said.

The assault is led by the 210th battalion of CRPF's CoBRA units and has teams from the Chhattisgarh police, its Special Task Force (STF), DRG, some regular CRPF units and Telangana Police

Four helicopters, two drone squadrons comprising 20 big and small unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in each along with satellite imagery and maps provided by the NTRO have been deployed to track Hidma, the top commander of the PLGA battalion no 1, the officer said. Inputs suggested that Hidma was seen

around a bunker built in the Karregutta Hills along with an armed squad and the operation was launched on this information, a second officer said.

This is the biggest operation launched by any of the security agencies in or around Chhattisgarh this year, he said.

The hill area is dotted with many improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and the forces are still on the job, the officer said. The offensive is part of the Union government's declaration to end Left Wing Extremism (LWE) from the country by March, 2026. Chhattisgarh and its border areas remain the "last bastion" of this task, according to officials.

The operation, one of biggest counter-insurgency actions launched in Bastar region, involved around 10,000 security personnel belonging to different units, including the District Reserve Guard (DRG), Bastar Fighters, Special Task Force (STF), all units of the state police, as well as the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and its elite Commando Battalions for Resolute Action (CoBRA), he said. The Telangana police were also assisting in the operation, the official said.

Second edition of Milipol India showcases cutting-edge defence solutions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The second edition of Milipol India 2025 was formally inaugurated on Thursday by Francois-Noël Buffet, representing the French Minister of the Interior, alongside esteemed dignitaries.

The event witnessed the presence of Dr Thierry Mathou, the French Ambassador to India, and Colonel Yannick Vidal, Chief of Staff for Operations from the French National Gendarmerie Intervention Group (GIGN), along with senior officials from Indian and French security and governmental agencies.

Enhancing the significance of the occasion, India's Minister of State for Home Affairs, Nityanand Rai, delivered a keynote address, emphasising the strengthening Indo-French collaboration in homeland



security. He highlighted the joint efforts in advanced technology development, intelligence sharing, and reinforcing security infrastructure, reaffirming the commitment of both nations toward global security advancements and counter-terrorism strategies.

Rover Mark-1, developed by "Security Defence System," "totally Makein India, is a cutting-edge innovation known for producing the highest number of indigenous products. Designed for handling suspicious objects, with its load capacity of 10 kg. Equipped with four cameras, it offers precise control — up to 200 meters out of sight and 01 km within the line of sight and weighs 84 kg. This advanced device is utilised by CISF, J and K Police, Maharashtra Police and Punjab Police, along with security operations at four air-

ports. CARACAL from UAE has showcased some of the finest weapons, with their flagship model, the CSR 50 anti-material sniper rifle, taking center stage — an asset that could significantly enhance Indian Army, CAPF and State police operations. With an effective range of 2 km and beyond, it offers long-range precision essential for border security, counter-terrorism missions, and high-threat engagements. Maintaining its distinction as the lightest in its category, weighing just 10 kg without accessories, the rifle ensures greater mobility and operational efficiency for soldiers in rugged terrains.

This year, the rifle has seen impressive advancements, including advanced ergonomics and reduced recoil, enhancing stability for Indian sharpshooters during prolonged operations.

Akhilesh slams airfare surge post-Pahalgam terror attack

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Lucknow

Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday condemned the recent terror attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, while also launching a scathing attack on the sharp spike in airfares to and from Srinagar in its aftermath. Calling the incident a national tragedy, Akhilesh expressed full support for strong government action against terrorism but criticised what he described as opportunistic profiteering and intelligence failure.

Addressing a press conference at the SP headquarters in Lucknow, the former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister said, "We are with the government on this issue. The central government must take strict and effective action against the perpetrators of this act of terror. But the BJP cannot absolve itself of responsibility. If earlier lessons had been learned, this tragedy might have been prevented."

Akhilesh Yadav condemned the hike in airfares from Srinagar following the attack, calling it "inhuman, shameful and a form of extortion."

He accused airline operators of exploiting a national crisis for profit and questioned the government's silence on the issue. "How can the government remain mute when airlines are charging exorbitant prices during a time of crisis? This reflects not just apathy but collusion. Taxes from these ticket prices go to the government—so why is there no regulation?" he asked.

Reports indicate that ticket prices from Srinagar surged dramatically within 24 hours of the attack, leaving many stranded tourists and pilgrims unable to return home. Some fares were reportedly double or triple the usual rates.

Akhilesh urged the Civil Aviation Ministry to step in immediately and implement a mechanism to regulate airfare during emergencies. "There must be



Samajwadi Party (SP) President Akhilesh Yadav addressing a press conference at the party office in Lucknow on Thursday

clear rules to prevent profiteering in times of national distress. The silence of the authorities only emboldens such behaviour," he added. On national security, the SP chief maintained a bipartisan stance, urging unity across political lines. "Terrorists have no religion. Their only aim is to spread fear. The country is angry, and this is a time to stand together, not play politics," he said.

However, he did not shy away from criticising the BJP for prioritising propaganda over preparedness. "While the BJP spends crores on publicity, our security systems remain underfunded. It is time to stop the slogans and start focusing on real action," he said. Reaffirming his opposition to the Agniveer recruitment scheme, Akhilesh said, "The youth of this country reject Agniveer. They want permanent jobs, not temporary assignments. The government should reconsider this scheme for the sake of national security." He supported the five recent decisions taken by the

Centre against Pakistan in response to terror activity, stating, "We back those moves, but the government must go further. Tougher decisions are necessary."

Expressing dismay over attempts to politicise the tragedy, Akhilesh alleged that "even in this moment of grief, BJP leaders are circulating animated posters for political gain. Airline profiteering, social media propaganda—these are signs of a party looking for opportunity in disaster."

Calling the Pahalgam attack a failure of the intelligence system, he said, "This was not just a single lapse. It reflects a deeper, structural failure. Why did not previous attacks prompt stronger preventive action?"

He concluded with a call for lasting, impactful reforms. "We all want terrorism to be wiped out from its roots. We had hopes when demonetisation happened, when Article 370 was removed—but those hopes must be matched with decisive action, not just announcements."

Assam CM slams Rahul, warns against caste-based politics

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Hojai

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday alleged Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was trying to divide Hindus on the basis of castes, but the terrorists who perpetrated the Pahalgam attack just wanted to know the religion of the victims.

Addressing a panchayat poll rally in Hojai, Sarma said there was no room for caste-based politics in the country at the moment.

"Terrorists earlier never asked about the religious identities of their targets, but in Pahalgam, victims were asked about their faith. When they replied that they were Hindus, the men were shot dead right in front of their wives," he said.

"Is it a crime to be a Hindu? Hindus have been in India for 5,000 years and will remain here. Such acts are not acceptable," he asserted.

Maintaining that people of all religions were safe under the BJP government, Sarma urged everyone to unite in the fight against terrorism.

"Hindus and Muslims have to fight terrorism together, have to work together," he said. Hitting out at Gandhi, the CM claimed that he was trying to divide the Hindus into OBCs, SCs and STs.

"But the terrorists did not ask the caste, they asked only whether the target was a Hindu or not. There is no room for caste politics. 'Ek rahenge toh safe rahenge' (we will be safe if we stay united)," he said, calling upon Hindus to remain united.

"We have to be united and punish countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh," he added.

Sarma claimed that some people living in Assam were indirectly supporting Pakistan through posts on social media and warned that they would not be spared, however important they may be.

He also spoke of a Congress MP from

the state who "stayed in Pakistan" for 15 days without informing the government.

"The Congress has three MPs in Assam. One of them had crossed into Pakistan through the Atari border and stayed there for 15 days without informing the government. We have all the evidence," he claimed.

"We won't forgive such people and will take stringent action against them," he said.

Appealing to the people to support the BJP and its allies in the panchayat polls, Sarma claimed that the state has been witnessing a prolonged phase of peace since 2021.

He alleged that it was only killings, blasts, agitations, corruption, communal riots, and insurgency under the Congress governments, which believed

Appealing to the people to support the BJP and its allies in the panchayat polls, Sarma claimed that the state has been witnessing a prolonged phase of peace since 2021

in the 'panchamrit' of "lungi, dhoti, suta (yarn), blanket and mosquito net" as means of appeasement.

"But with the BJP coming to power here in 2016, peace has been restored and the state is witnessing rapid strides in growth," Sarma, who heads the second BJP-led government in the state, said.

The CM said the ration card, which was once a document for "Bangladeshis to fend off police", is now linked to welfare schemes.

He affirmed the government's commitment to ensure that the schemes benefit the most deprived section, stating that more assistance in the form of bringing down of LPG cylinder prices and power tariff will be announced later this year.

US based Hindu outfit asks PM to declare India as Hindu Rashtra

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ Kochi

Close on the heels of Tuesday's massacre of 28 Hindus at Pahalgam in Kashmir by the assassins of Lashkar-e-Toiba, the United States based Global Heritage Hindu Foundation (GHHF), an umbrella organisation of all Hindu outfits, has asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to declare India as Hindu Rashtra.

In a release issued on Thursday, the GHHF said the entire Hindu community has been shocked, surprised, stunned, and astonished to read about the ghastly massacre of tourists in Kashmir's Pahalgam.

"Muslim terrorists shot and killed at least 26 tourists and injured nearly 40 tourists on April 22nd in Pahalgam, Kashmir."

Intelligence sources and eyewitnesses revealed that the terrorists inquired about the religion of the tourists before shooting them dead.

"They even looked at their ID cards and killed them if they happened to be Hindus," said the GHHF release.

It further states that since Independence, Hindus have become sacrificial goats in the hands of terrorists.

"Government after government have been allowing Hindu haters to rampage through the scenic Himalayan region."

"Terrorists took advantage of liberal media and Leftist parties, and have been hitting, attacking, raping, killing Hindus regularly."

These inhuman, insane, merciless attacks have claimed tens of thousands of lives over more than seven decades," said the GHHF which has been abstaining from making any kind of controversial demands all these years.

3,400 missing women, girls in MP with no end in sight

GIRISH SHARMA ■ Bhopal

Eighteen days have passed since a six-year-old girl disappeared from under a bridge in Bhopal's Koh-e-Fiza area, and the Madhya Pradesh Police still have no answers.

This is not just a case of one missing child—it's a glaring indictment of a crumbling law and order system in a state that prides itself on going "high-tech."

If a child can vanish from the capital city, just miles from the Chief Minister's residence and top police offices, what hope is there for families in the remaining 54 districts? The harsh reality is: there is none.

According to data from the Police Headquarters, over 3,400 women and girls have gone missing in Madhya Pradesh in the last three years alone.

That's nearly 100 a month. And these are just the reported cases. Behind every statistic lies a devastated family, a broken future, and a police force that seems either unwilling or incapable of acting.

The much-hyped 'Operation Muskan', re-announced with fanfare last year by DGP Kailash Makwana, was supposed to rescue and rehabilitate missing girls.

In truth, the initiative has existed since 2021—with little to no results to show. It has become another bureaucratic buzzword, useful only in press releases, not on the ground where it matters.

Congress Media Department Chairman Mukesh Nayak minced no words in his criticism of the government and police.

"The Madhya Pradesh police lack both the resources and the will to act. It's one of the most corrupt forces in the country.

Officers only move when there's money involved. If there's no bribe, there's no investigation," Nayak told The Pioneer.

The current case exposes how hollow the system truly is. The missing girl's mother, a homeless woman with eight children, suspects a relative's involvement.

Yet the police have done little beyond scanning a few CCTV clips and making vague statements. No arrests. No progress. No urgency.

Worse still, basic policing infrastructure remains broken. CCTV networks are patchy, rapid-response teams are missing in action, and coordination between units is almost non-existent. This is not just negligence—it's state-sanctioned apathy.

The disconnect between government claims and ground realities has never been wider. While ministers sit in air-conditioned offices, families of missing girls wander from one police station to another, begging for action.

This isn't a law and order issue anymore. It's a humanitarian crisis.

If the administration cannot protect the most vulnerable—children sleeping under bridges, women walking home from work—then what legitimacy does it have left? How long will the government continue to hide behind numbers and announcements?

It's time for the people of Madhya Pradesh to demand more than promises. They deserve safety, justice, and accountability. Because until every missing girl is found, and every guilty officer held accountable, no campaign, no slogan, and no speech will matter.

Nitish condemns terror, reaffirms NDA alliance loyalty

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Madhubani (Bihar)

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday condemned the Pahalgam attack, emphasising that the entire country stands united in the fight against terrorism.

Speaking at a government programme to mark the National Panchayati Raj Day in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Kumar also reaffirmed his political alignment, saying, "I made a mistake in the past, but I will stay with the NDA forever."

"The attack at Pahalgam left the entire nation devastated. It was a heinous act. We all condemn it. I express my condolences to the bereaved families. We are with you," and the entire country is united in the fight against terrorism."

Terrorists struck at a prime tourist location in Pahalgam in south Kashmir on Tuesday, killing at least 26 people, mostly tourists, and injuring several others.

Stating that he had "made mistakes" in the past by joining hands with the Opposition, the Bihar CM said, "I will stay with NDA forever. I went 'idhar udhar aur Gadbadhi Hua' in the past. But now, I am with the NDA and will remain with the alliance forever."

"We formed the government in 2005. The previous state government had done nothing for panchayats. It was in a poor state. "When we came to power, we amended the Bihar Panchayat Raj Act in 2006, which established the gram panchayat at the village level, panchayat samiti at the block level, and zila parishad at the district level," the CM said.

"We also introduced 50 per cent reservation for women in panchayats and



PM Narendra Modi with Bihar Governor Arif Mohammad Khan, CM Nitish Kumar and Union Ministers Jitan Ram Manjhi, Lallan Singh, Chirag Paswan and others, flags-off a Nammo Bharat train launch, during National Panchayati Raj Day event in Madhubani on Thursday

municipalities. The previous government took no steps to improve the condition of women in the state.

"So far, our government has constructed 1,639 panchayat bhavans across Bihar for local bodies, and construction of the remaining bhavans will be completed before the upcoming elections later this year," he added.

The JD(U) supremo further said, "We have been working for the overall development of the state for the last 20 years — in sectors like education, transport, roads, electricity and water. When we

assumed office in 2005, the state budget was just ₹38,000 crore. For the financial year 2025-26, the budget has increased to ₹3.18 lakh crore."

He said this year alone, the state government approved 430 new schemes worth ₹50,000 crore for various districts.

Kumar added that the establishment of the Makhana Board in Bihar, opening of Greenfield Airports, and expansion of IIT Patna are also progressing with the help of the Centre.

The CM said he requested the PM to inaugurate the Khelo India Youth Games

2025, scheduled to be held in Patna from May 4. "It is a matter of great happiness that this major event is being hosted in Bihar," he said.

Bihar is set to host the seventh edition of Khelo India Youth Games 2025 from May 4 to 15.

The games will be organised in various cities including Patna, Gaya, Rajgir, Begusarai and Bhagalpur.

The CM and Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya recently unveiled the mascot and logo of Khelo India Youth Games 2025.

UP CM pays tribute to martyr Shubham Dwivedi

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ Kanpur

The mortal remains of Shubham Dwivedi, the young soldier from Kanpur who was killed in the recent terror attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, were consigned to flames with full state honours on Thursday. The atmosphere was heavy with grief and anger as thousands gathered to pay their final respects. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath visited Shubham's residence earlier in the day and met his grieving family members, including his wife Aishwarya, who broke down while recounting the harrowing details of the incident. CM Yogi offered condolences and assured the family that strictest action would be taken against those responsible.

"Have faith in the government. Terrorism will be wiped out," he said. Yogi got emotional and when he came back from Dwivedi's residence he was seen wiping eyes.

The Chief Minister condemned the Pahalgam attack, calling it "a cruel, cowardly and inhuman act." He added, "Shubham had been married just two months ago. The entire nation mourns his loss. This barbaric act has shaken not only India but the world." CM Yogi reaffirmed that the government's zero-tolerance policy towards terrorism would be enforced strictly. He said that both Prime



UP CM Yogi Adityanath pays tribute to Shubham Dwivedi at his residence in Kanpur on Thursday

Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah had taken tough decisions during the recent CCS (Cabinet Committee on Security) meeting. As Shubham's body was taken for the last rites, the streets of Kanpur overflowed with people—students, traders, government officials, and ordinary citizens—all standing shoulder to shoulder in a powerful show of unity and respect. Chants of "Shaheed Shubham Amar Rahein" filled the air as the funeral procession passed through the city. The pyre was lit in the presence of his family, local officials, and a sea of mourners. Emotions ran high as Shubham's father, with folded hands, pleaded with the

Chief Minister to ensure that the perpetrators receive the harshest punishment. "Make sure no other family has to go through this pain," he said. Shubham's untimely death has struck a deep chord across Kanpur and beyond. The district administration, honouring public sentiments, ensured that the final rites were conducted with full state honours.

Leaders from all walks of life have condemned the attack and expressed solidarity with the family. CM Yogi concluded by saying, "We are with the family. The double-engine government will not compromise on national security. The sacrifice of our brave son will not go in vain."

Assam MLA held for defending Pakistan after J and K attack

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Guwahati

Assam's opposition AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam was arrested on Thursday on sedition charges for allegedly defending Pakistan and its complicity in the Pahalgam terror attack, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

The AIUDF has distanced itself from the legislator's comments, stating that the views were his own and not of the party. "We have seen a video where the MLA is defending Pakistan and its complicity in the attack. I had instructed the police to take action and accordingly, the DGP has informed me that he has been arrested," Sarma said at a press conference here. Islam was arrested from his residence in Nagaon district.

"The MLA will be produced before a court and we will take the case to its logical conclusion," he added. Twenty-six people, mostly tourists, were killed in a terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam on Tuesday.

Sarma said no attempt to directly or indirectly support Pakistan through any means, including on social media, will be tolerated and the police have strict directions to act against such persons immediately. The chief minister, in a post on

X, affirmed the state government's strong action against anyone defending Pakistan.

"Assam will take the strongest possible action against anyone who dares to defend—directly or indirectly—the horrific, Pakistan-sponsored terror attack in Pahalgam. "Let it be known clearly: those who attempt to justify, normalise, or dilute the brutal murder of innocent civilians are not exercising freedom of expression—they are standing against the soul of India," he said.

"Assam Police, also in a post on social media, said the AIUDF legislator has been arrested for a "misleading and instigating statement, which went viral and had the potential to create an adverse situation". A case has been registered at Nagaon Sadar police station under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita. Meanwhile, AIUDF president Badruddin Ajmal said the views expressed by Islam are his personal opinion.

"The comments made by Aminul Islam are unfortunate. This is the time to stand with our government. Terrorists have no religion. These terrorists are giving Islam a bad name," Ajmal said. He maintained that the views expressed by Islam in the video did not reflect the party's stand, and the AIUDF already condemned the attack.

Assam to pay ex gratia of ₹5 lakh to families of all 26 killed in attack

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Guwahati

The Assam government on Thursday announced an ex-gratia of ₹5 lakh for families of all 26 people killed in the Pahalgam terror attack. Assam had reeled under insurgency for long and "we can understand the pain of the families," Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

"Addressing a press conference here, he said, "Our government has decided to offer this small amount as a token of respect for the sacrifice made by the deceased and their families."

Sarma said strict watch is being kept along the state's border with Bangladesh also. "We are concerned about Bangladesh. "There has been hobnobbing between Bangladesh and Pakistan. We have alerted our security agencies to keep watch and remain vigilant," he said.

Chief Ministers of other NorthEastern States to be part of Bhupen Hazarika Centenary Birthday celebration, said Assam CM ₹7500 crore Guwahati Ring Road Project will include another Bridge over Brahmaputra river.

Terror in Pahalgam shatters India's diplomatic high

As world leaders lauded India's geopolitical ascent, the attack marked a chilling reminder that terror in Kashmir remains a calculated lever in the regional and international balance of power

FIRST Column

JD Vance, the Vice President of the United States, arrived in India on 19 April, following a solemn stop at the Vatican, where he became the final high-ranking official to meet the late Pope Francis — an emblematic rebel of the modern Church whose death this week marked the end of a transformative papacy.

Vance's arrival was framed as an endorsement of India's ascendant geopolitical status, punctuated by public tributes to Prime Minister Modi and the deepening of the Indo-American strategic alliance. This diplomatic spectacle was further amplified by the April 9 extradition of Tahawwur Hussain Rana, a Pakistani — origin Canadian linked to the 2008 Mumbai attacks, representing a rare convergence of legal triumphs between the two nations in their fight against terrorism.

Yet, this orchestration of diplomatic victories quickly unravelled, as within days of these high-profile engagements, Kashmir — a region central to India's evolving image — was once again thrust into global headlines, not by progress, but by tragedy. On April 22, a massacre in the idyllic meadows of Baisaran near Pahalgam once heralded as the face of Kashmir's resurgence, accentuated a brutal paradox: the strategic narrative of peace and prosperity was violently interrupted by terror, forcing the world to confront the enduring volatility of the region at a moment when India appeared poised for diplomatic consolidation.

On April 22, 2025, a massacre unfolded in the meadows of Baisaran near Pahalgam, often romanticised as "India's Switzerland." What had become a symbol of India's Kashmir renaissance — a picturesque site of family vacations, film shoots, and summer retreats — was reduced to a field of carnage as unidentified gunmen opened fire on a group of tourists. At least twenty-eight civilians, mostly men, were methodically executed, while women and children were reportedly spared.

The attack was not merely an act of terror, but a deeply choreographed intervention in India's domestic and international narrative regarding Kashmir. It sought not just to kill, but to provoke, destabilise, and symbolically mutilate the emerging image of a peaceful, integrated, and economically flourishing region. The timing of the attack is far too conspicuous to be dismissed as arbitrary. Beyond coinciding with the visit of the American Vice President and coming a few days after the extradition of a high-profile terrorist suspect, the attack occurred against the backdrop of growing international recognition of India's Kashmir policy post the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019. Since that constitutional transformation, Jammu and Kashmir have experienced what some argue is the beginning of a socio-economic metamorphosis. The region recorded a significant uptick in tourist arrivals, over 3.5 million in 2024 alone — and notable improvements in infrastructure, per capita income, and public order, especially relative to other northern Indian states. Critics of New Delhi's policy feared a resurgence of insur-



gency post-2019, but such forecasts had not materialised at the scale predicted. Instead, the Indian Government appeared to have successfully restrained militant mobilisation through strategic military presence, economic incentives, and political integration. In this context, the Pahalgam attack functions as a violent punctuation — an abrupt and bloody interruption in a gradually stabilising narrative. Its deliberate orchestration, selective targeting of non-Muslim male tourists, and execution-style killings point to a calculated act of psychological and political warfare. Intelligence sources have attributed the operation to The Resistance Front (TRF), a group often described as a proxy of

Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Pakistan-based organisation responsible for the 26/11 Mumbai attacks. Although the Pakistani state has officially denied any involvement, the attack bears the hallmarks



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

FROM THE CHATTISINGHPORA MASSACRE IN MARCH 2000, WHERE 36 SIKH VILLAGERS WERE EXECUTED DURING PRESIDENT CLINTON'S VISIT, TO THE 2001 JAMMU AND KASHMIR ASSEMBLY BOMBING, THE 2003 NANDIMARG MASSACRE OF KASHMIRI PANDITS, THE 2017 AMARNATH YATRA AMBUSH, AND NOW THE 2025 PAHALGAM KILLINGS, THE PATTERN IS UNMISTAKABLE

of asymmetric warfare, characteristic of entities that, though ostensibly autonomous, often operate under the shadow and sanction of foreign state apparatuses. This week, newly declassified US intelligence documents, released by the National Security Archive, highlight a chilling historical continuity with the current crisis.

A 1981 memorandum warned of catastrophic consequences from an Indian strike on Pakistan's Karachi Nuclear Power Plant, with up to 20,000 latent cancer cases in Karachi due to Iodine-131 exposure. The document reflected Washington's concerns about how quickly a conventional South Asian conflict could escalate to nuclear war. This was echoed in a 1989 report by the US State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, which deemed a full-scale war between India and Pakistan "improbable," yet stressed the high risk of escalation through miscalculation, especially in the event of strikes on Pakistan's nuclear sites. By 1993, a National Intelligence Estimate suggested a one in five chance of war, noting that nuclear rivalry, cross-border militancy, and rising extremism could turn even minor skirmishes into a regional disaster. What emerges from these archival assessments is a grim continuity: terror

in Kashmir has consistently been a strategic tool wielded not merely to express ideological dissent but to force geopolitical recalibration. This is not a theatre of mindless extremism; it is a crucible of meticulously calibrated violence. From the Chattisinghpura massacre in March 2000, where 36 Sikh villagers were executed during President Clinton's visit, to the 2001 Jammu and Kashmir Assembly bombing, the 2003 Nandimarg massacre of Kashmiri Pandits, the 2017 Amarnath Yatra ambush, and now the 2025 Pahalgam killings, the pattern is unmistakable. Civilian targeting escalates in moments of diplomatic progress, suggesting an ideological commitment by militant actors to challenge not only the Indian state but also its evolving position within the global order.

The present attack comes at a moment when India is enjoying heightened diplomatic engagement with the Arab Countries and the West. Saudi Arabia, traditionally a close ally of Pakistan, has in recent years pivoted towards India as a key economic and strategic partner. The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and even Iran have signalled similar recalibrations.

This realignment was most visible during the 2019 India-Pakistan standoff when the Gulf states played a critical role in de-escalation, and again when they muted their responses to India's abrogation of Kashmir's autonomy. The Kashmir issue, once a central rallying cry in Islamic internationalism, has lost its salience in the Gulf's strategic calculus. For militant organisations and their state backers, this diminishing global sympathy poses an existential challenge. Reinvigorating the Kashmir discourse through acts of horror appears to be the chosen mode of revival.

It would be naïve to view the Pahalgam massacre in isolation. The possibility of future attacks targeting soft civilian clusters — tourists, religious pilgrims, migrant workers — across other regions in South Asia cannot be discounted. Nepal's porous borders, Sri Lanka's post-conflict fragilities, and India's Northeast remain potential theatres for replication.

In the wake of this attack, Prime Minister Modi faces a dilemma reminiscent of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's conundrum following the Hamas assault in October 2023. A tempered response could be construed as weakness, emboldening adversaries and fuelling domestic political critiques of failed security assurances. Conversely, a muscular retaliation — especially if aimed at Pakistan or its proxies — risks internationalising the Kashmir dispute once again, undoing years of diplomatic effort to position it as an internal Indian matter. Moreover, in the context of escalating global multipolarity and emergent regional axes, a misstep could precipitate a broader crisis, pulling in actors far beyond South Asia.

(The writer is a columnist based in Colombo. Views are personal)

Mental Health: A silent crisis demanding urgent action

Mental well-being can no longer be treated as secondary to physical health. As Government initiatives take shape and public awareness grows, the time has come for a collective, compassionate response to protect our nation's mental health and with it, our future

There is an old saying that a healthy mind leads to a healthy body — I could not agree with it more! Ever since the pandemic, we are witnessing a steep rise in mental health related conditions. It's a matter of grave concern that a large number of people are today suffering from what is termed as unmanageable stress, depression and anxiety. It is equally concerning to note that these ailments are impacting across the age spectrum, be it students, young adults or the elderly.

When we look at the data pertaining to mental health, it is like being hit by a ton of bricks. Such is the extent of this issue that one student is committing suicide every hour in India.

Taking note of the growing suicide deaths in higher educational institutions across the country, the Supreme Court recently formed a National Task Force for a mechanism to prevent student suicide deaths on campuses and address their mental health issues.

The bench said that the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data for 2021 highlights the grim reality that over 13,000 students lost their lives by committing suicide in the country.

According to the World Health Organisation, depression affects over 300 million people globally, and it is predicted to be the leading cause of disability by 2030.

In 2024, studies in India continue to reveal a significant burden of depression, with estimates indicating that over 56 million people are affected and research points to a rising trend, particularly in rural areas and among certain demographics.

Factors like rapid urbanisation, economic pressures, social isolation, and the pandemic have contributed to the increase. The Bipolar disorder landscape in India is also quite serious, about 1 in 150 persons in the country suffer from it, and quite disturbingly, 70 per cent remain untreated.



as depression or bipolar disorder. This finding is significant as it points to a series of progressions before this most tragic final step.

When we look deeper into the mental health scenario in India, multiple issues that have a profound impact on mental health — come to the fore.

In the case of the students and the young, many are too busy searching for material things as the entire space for them has become extremely competitive, there is reduced focus on relaxation and unwinding, and as a result burn outs and depression encircle their lives.

In all this, the impact of the internet and social media in aggravating pressures

and setting unattainable and overambitious goals — courtesy of peer pressure, is also creating a havoc in the lives of the youth.

In the case of the elderly, we are witnessing the rise in loneliness as their children are either not living with them, due to studies or jobs, or spending much less time because of preoccupations and inability to detach from their busy schedules. There is therefore, a fear of growing old, along with increasing insecurities — about who will take care of them, when they reach their physical limits due to advancing age.

Since the pandemic, we are witnessing a renewed focus and much greater emphasis on mental health issues. They are now being increasingly considered as much of a priority as many physical issues.

The Indian Government has launched several initiatives to address mental health, including the National Tele Mental Health Programme (Tele

MANAS) and the Ayushman Bharat, HWC Scheme.

Tele MANAS provides free, 24/7 mental health support through a toll-free helpline, while the Ayushman Bharat scheme integrates mental health services into primary healthcare. Additionally, the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) and the District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) are key components of India's mental healthcare services. For the elderly, the Government has launched the National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly (NPHCE) and the Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY).

The NPHCE provides comprehensive healthcare, including mental health services, to senior citizens. AVYAY supports various welfare initiatives for senior citizens, including grant-in-aid for mental health services and awareness programs. Additionally, the National Helpline for Senior Citizens (Elderline) offers support and guidance, including emotional sup-

port for those struggling with mental health issues.

It is extremely reassuring that the highest levels of our nation — are aware and alive, to the seriousness of the situation. In fact, our hon'ble Prime Minister has led from the front with his views and possible solutions that can go a long way in addressing this critical subject. In his popular monthly program 'Mann Ki Baat', he highlighted the importance of mental health, especially among the youth in the current era, and spoke with crystal clarity about the role of physical activity, diet, yoga, along with the use of technology like artificial intelligence to elevate mental health.

This should be seen as a nudge, and it requires a collective approach that involves the families, academia and the community to create an enabling ecosystem that safeguards our students and the generations to follow. These guardrails should both protect and strengthen — protect against the perils of social media,

the pressure that it can unleash on the young and innocent, strengthen the two-way communication (candid and unreserved) between the students and their parents/families, strengthen the role of the friends, peers and the community in creating a positive environment that accepts average performance as not the end of the world, and instils the spirit of optimism.

All of these, will ensure, that the dejection from failure or pressure of excelling, are dealt with most effectively. The educational institutions and their leadership also have to provide an environment where students feel motivated, encouraged and appreciated. Grades and excellence alone are not what life is all about — it's about an honest to self and best possible effort.

It's for all this, that suitable conditions have to be created. This can include counselling, dedicated presence and round the clock availability of experts who can spot the red flags and identify those who need psychological support and guidance in a timely manner, thereby, ensuring that a decline in mental faculties of the students in their institutions is drastically reduced.

This will play an impactful role in the creation of a quintessential complete establishment — one that focuses not just on the studies but also creates avenues of growth for the all-round development of its students.

In the end, we have to be mindful of the ground realities. Our journey has just started on this very long and arduous path, and it will take multiple approaches to address this key health aspect, that has a huge bearing on our country.

Mental health is a significant component of a 'Swastha Bharat' dream, and has a direct and crucial impact on national creativity and productivity. While factors that contribute to mental ailments will only increase in the coming times, it's our proactive and head-on engagement, that will ensure effective remedies.

I do believe, that well begun is half done, and that we are indeed headed in the right direction — one of hope and promise of a bright future!

(The writer is President — Corporate Affairs, ITC. Views are personal)

Pakistan top brass meet, discuss India's response

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Islamabad

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday held a meeting with key ministers and the three services chiefs to formulate the country's response on India's move to suspend the Indus Water Treaty and downgrade diplomatic ties after the Pahalgam terror attack.

The decisions taken at the National Security Committee meeting were not immediately known.

India on Wednesday suspended the Indus Water Treaty of 1960 and announced downgrading diplomatic ties with Pakistan, including expulsion of its military attaches, in view of the cross-border links to the Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26

people on Tuesday.

Earlier, Dawn reported that deputy prime minister Ishaq Dar, while speaking to a private television channel late on Wednesday, lashed out at India's approach, calling it "immature" and "hasty".

"India has not given any evidence. They have not shown any maturity in their response," Dar said. "This is a non-serious approach. They started creating hype immediately after the incident."

Pakistan's Foreign Office, in a separate statement earlier on Wednesday, expressed regret over the loss of life. Diplomatic observers warn that the Indian response and Pakistan's counter-messaging could push bilateral relations to new lows, further widening a rift that has persisted since the 2019 Pulwama-Balakot crisis.

The treaty suspension, in particular, risks sparking long-term water disputes, while the downgrading of diplomatic ties could hinder any future de-escalation efforts, Dawn reported.

A day after the Pahalgam attack, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) met in New Delhi on Wednesday evening under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and firmed up the responses to the terror attack.

The CCS also decided to close the Integrated Check Post at Attari with immediate effect. Pakistani nationals will not be permitted to travel to India under the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme (SVES) and any such visas issued in the past to Pakistani nationals are deemed cancelled, it was announced.

China successfully launches three new astronauts to its space station

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Beijing

China has successfully launched three astronauts to its space station on Thursday to replace their colleagues manning the station for the past six months.

The Shenzhou-20 crewed spaceship carrying the astronauts blasted off at 5:17 pm (Beijing Time) from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in northwest China.

Minutes after the launch an official in the mission control centre announced that the launch was a "complete success." The launch was telecast live by the state-run CGTN.

The spaceship is carrying three astronauts — Chen Dong, Chen Zhongrui and Wang Jie.

It will dock with the space station later tonight.

Shenzhou-20 is the 35th flight mission of China's manned space programme, and the fifth crewed mission during the application and development stage of China's space station.

The crew is scheduled to return to the Dongfeng landing site in north China in late October this year.

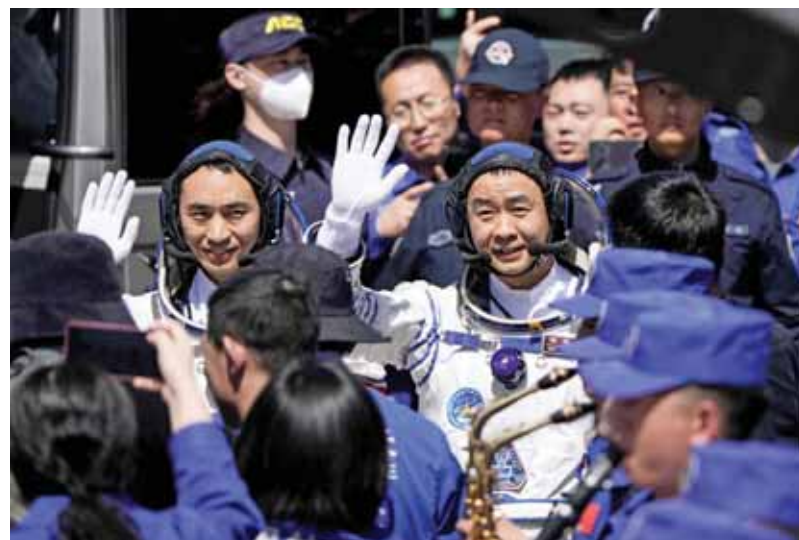
China rotates a three-member crew manning the space station named Tiangong every six months.

After the new set of crew members enter the station, the other three are expected to return to earth on April 29.

The crew will conduct new life science experiments involving zebrafish, planarians and streptomycetes, the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) spokesman Lin Xiqiang told the media on Wednesday.

These experiments will mark China's first space-based investigation into the regeneration of planarians, a new organism introduced to China's space station and known for their extraordinary ability to regrow organs, Lin said.

This project will enhance our understanding of fundamental mechanisms of regeneration at the individual level and could provide insights into human health issues related to space-induced injuries, Lin said.



Chinese astronauts for the Shenzhou-20 mission Chen Dong, right, and Chen Zhongrui wave during a send-off ceremony for their manned space mission at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China

The CMSA also said on Wednesday that two Pakistani astronauts will be selected to receive spaceflight training in China to take part in a joint mission to the country's space station.

One of the two Pakistanis will participate as a payload specialist, state-run Xinhua quoted a CMSA spokesperson as saying.

China built its space station after it was reportedly excluded from the International Space Station (ISS) over concerns that China's space programme is manned by its military, the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

It is currently the only country to have a space station while the ISS is a collaborative project of several countries.

Observers say China's space station may become the only one of its kind in orbit once the ISS retires in the coming years.

The two robotic arms of the station, especially the long one which has the ability to grab objects including satellites from space, drew international concerns.

The launch day coincided with China's 10th Space Day. China had designated April 24 as its Space Day in 2016 to mark the successful launch of its first satellite,

Dongfanghong-1 on April 24, 1970.

Separately, the China National Space Administration (CNSA) announced on Thursday that scientists from institutions in France, Germany, Japan, Pakistan, the UK and the US have been granted the opportunity to borrow lunar samples collected by the Change-5 mission for scientific research.

At a ceremony for China's Space Day in Shanghai, the agency announced that seven institutions from six countries have been authorised to borrow the lunar samples, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

In 2020, China's Change-5 mission retrieved samples from the moon weighing about 1,731 grams.

Shan Zhongde, head of the CNSA, said China's lunar exploration programme has always adhered to the principles of equality, mutual benefits, peaceful utilisation and win-win cooperation, sharing achievements with the international community.

By the end of December 2023, CNSA had received 24 applications from 11 countries and international organisations, the report said.

Korean leader indicted for alleged bribery

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Seoul

South Korean prosecutors indicted former liberal President Moon Jae-in on bribery charges Thursday, saying that a budget airline gave his son-in-law a lucrative no-show job during Moon's term in office.

Moon's indictment adds him to a long list of South Korean leaders who have faced trials or scandals at the close of their terms or after leaving office.

Prosecutors allege that Moon, who served as president from 2017-2022, received bribes totalling 217 million Won (USD 151,705) from Lee Sang-jik, founder of the budget carrier Thai Eastar Jet, in the form of wages, housing expenses and other financial assistance provided to Moon's then-son-in-law from 2018-2020.

South Korean media reported that Moon's daughter and her husband were divorced in 2021.

The Jeonju District Prosecutors' Office said in a statement that Lee was also indicted on charges of paying bribes to Moon and committing breaches of trust.

The prosecutors' office said Moon's former son-in-law was hired as a director-

level employee at Lee's company in Thailand even though he had no work experience in the airline industry.

The office said he spent only brief periods at the company's office in Thailand and carried out only minor duties while claiming to be working remotely from South Korea.

Moon's indictment adds him to a long list of South Korean leaders who have faced trials or scandals at the close of their terms or after leaving office

The prosecutors' office said it had not found evidence that Moon performed political favours for Lee, who worked on Moon's campaign, but that Lee likely expected his assistance to be repaid.

Lee was later named the head of the state-funded Korea SME and Startups Agency and was nominated by Moon's party to run for parliament while Moon was in office, but the prosecutors' office said that it hasn't found any evidence that Moon helped Lee win those positions.

There was no immediate response from Moon.

Moon's indictment comes before South Korea elects a new president on June 3 to succeed conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol, who was ousted over an ill-fated imposition of martial law. It's unclear if Moon's indictment will influence prospects for liberals to win back the presidency.

Observers say liberal presidential aspirant Lee Jae-myung is heavily favoured to win the vote as conservatives remain in disarray over Yoon's ouster, although Lee also faces criminal trials on allegations of corruption and other charges.

Most past South Korean presidents have been embroiled in scandal in the final months of their terms or after leaving office. In 2017, Park Geun-hye, South Korea's first female president, was removed from office and arrested over an explosive corruption scandal.

Park's conservative predecessor Lee Myung-bak was also arrested on a range of crimes, years after leaving office. Moon's friend and former liberal President Roh Moo-hyun jumped to his death in 2009 amid corruption investigations into his family.

South Korean truth commission halts probe into adoption fraud, cases in limbo

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Seoul

The South Korean government's fact-finding commission suspended its groundbreaking investigation into the extensive fraud and abuse that tainted the nation's historic foreign adoption program, a decision stemming from internal disputes among commissioners regarding which cases warranted recognition as problematic.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission confirmed human rights violations in just 56 of the 367 complaints filed by adoptees before suspending its investigation Wednesday night, just one month before its May 26 deadline.

The fate of the remaining 311 cases, either deferred or incompletely reviewed, now hinges on whether lawmakers will establish a new truth commission through legislation during Seoul's next government, which takes office after the presidential by-election on June 3.

After a nearly three-year investigation into adoption cases across Europe, the United States, and Australia, the commission concluded in a March interim report that the government bears responsibility for facilitating a foreign adoption program riddled with fraud and abuse, driven by efforts to cut welfare costs and carried out by private agencies that often manipulated children's backgrounds and origins.

However, some adoptees, and even

members of the commission, criticised the cautiously-worded report, arguing that it should have more forcefully established the government's complicity.

Disputes also arose after the commission's nine-member decision-making panel, dominated by conservative-leaning members appointed by recently ousted President Yoon Suk Yeol and his party, voted on March 25 to defer the assessments of 42 adoptee cases, citing insufficient documentation to conclusively prove the adoptions were problematic.

Commission officials haven't disclosed which documents were central to the discussions. However, they suggested that some commissioners were hesitant to recognize cases where adoptees couldn't definitively prove falsification of biological details in their adoption papers, either through meeting their birth parents or verifying information about them.

On Wednesday, the panel resolved the standoff by unanimously agreeing to suspend, rather than completely drop, the investigation into the 42 cases. The approach leaves open the door for the cases to be reconsidered if a future truth commission is established. The panel also agreed to suspend investigations into the remaining 269 cases, citing insufficient time to complete the reviews before the deadline, according to three commission sources who described the discussions to the Associated Press.

The ruling triggered a snap presidential election set for June 3. Park Geon Tae, a senior investigator who led the probe into adoptions, said the truth commission would be unable to produce any further



investigation reports on adoptions before the end of its mandate, after the terms of five of the nine commissioners ended following Wednesday's meeting.

This potentially paralyses the decision-making process, which requires the support of at least five members. Most Korean adoptees were registered by agencies as abandoned orphans, even though many had relatives who could have been easily identified or located. This practice has often made it difficult - or even impossible - for them to trace their roots.

and sometimes pressured South Korea to keep the kids coming as they focused on satisfying their huge domestic demands for babies.

South Korea's government has never acknowledged direct responsibility for issues related to past adoptions and has so far not responded to the commission's recommendation to issue an official apology.

Modeled after the South African commission established in the 1990s to expose apartheid-era injustices, South Korea originally launched the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2006 to investigate past human rights violations. That ended its work in 2010.

Following the passing of a law that allowed for more investigations, the commission was relaunched in December 2020 under South Korea's former liberal government, with a focus on cases that occurred during the country's military dictatorship from the 1960s to 1980s.

Foreign adoptions were a major subject of the second commission, along with the atrocities at Brothers Home, a government-funded facility in Busan that kidnapped, abused and enslaved thousands of children and adults deemed as vagrants for decades until the 1980s. In January, the commission confirmed at least 31 cases in which children from Brothers Home were adopted abroad, which came years after The AP exposed adoptions from the facility as part of a vast, profit-driven operation.

Western nations ignored these problems

to accept cases in which adoptees have been unable to find information about their birth parents reflects a lack of understanding of the systemic problems in adoption and contradicts the commission's broader findings, which acknowledged the manipulation of children's origins, said Philsik Shin, a scholar at South Korea's Anyang University.

Shin's analysis of government, law enforcement, and adoption records concludes that more than 90 per cent of Korean children sent to the West between 1980 and 1987, when adoptions peaked, almost certainly had known relatives.

The commission's findings released in March broadly aligned with previous reporting by The Associated Press. The AP investigations, which were also documented by Frontline (PBS), detailed how South Korea's government, Western countries and adoption agencies worked in tandem to supply some 200,000 Korean children to parents overseas, despite years of evidence that many were being procured through questionable or outright unscrupulous means.

Military governments implemented special laws aimed at promoting foreign adoptions, removing judicial oversight and granting vast powers to private agencies, which bypassed proper child relinquishment practices while shipping thousands of children to the West every year.

SA scraps proposed tax increase after pushback

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Johannesburg

The South African government on Thursday cancelled a proposed tax increase that had threatened to collapse the unity government after a pushback from various political parties.

Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana announced that the government would no longer implement a 0.5 per cent increase on value-added tax (VAT), payable on goods and services including food and electricity, that would have increased it to 15.5 per cent.

The decision to forgo the increase follows extensive consultations with political parties, and careful consideration of the recommendations of the parliamentary committees

FINANCE MINISTER ENOCH GODONGWANA

The proposed VAT increase is the latest contentious issue faced by the unity government that was formed after the African National Congress party lost its parliamentary majority for the first time since coming to power in 1994.

"The decision to forgo the increase follows extensive consultations with political parties, and careful consideration of the recommendations of the parliamentary

committees," said Godongwana in a statement early Thursday.

The government was looking to increase tax revenues through the VAT increase, and Godongwana said the estimated revenue would fall short by around USD 4 billion.

The Democratic Alliance, the second-biggest political party in the country and the coalition government, opposed the VAT increase and voted against the annual budget which initially proposed it.

The DA subsequently challenged the matter in court this week and claimed victory on Thursday, saying the cancellation of the tax increase was a win for all South Africans.

"We will continue to fight for all South Africans, especially the poor and the marginalised, in seeking responsible public spending so that the government does not keep on raising taxes to fund unlawful expenditure, corruption and sheer waste," said DA federal chairperson Helen Zille. Opposition parties and civil society have also criticised the proposed increase as anti-poor.

More than 20 million people in South Africa rely on welfare grants, with the unemployment rate at over 32 per cent, according to official statistics.

This is the latest disagreement between the two main parties after the formation of the unity government last year.

Ancient Taiwan jawbone is of human ancestors: Scientists

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Taipei

An ancient jawbone discovered in Taiwan belonged to an enigmatic group of early human ancestors called Denisovans, scientists reported Thursday. Relatively little is known about Denisovans, an extinct group of human cousins that interacted with Neanderthals and our own species, Homo sapiens.

"Denisovan fossils are very scarce," with only a few confirmed finds in East Asia,

said study co-author Takumi Tsutaya at the Graduate University for Advanced Studies in Japan.

So far, the only known Denisovan fossils include partial jawbones, a few teeth and part of a finger bone found in caves in Siberia and Tibet. Some scientists believe fossils found in a cave in Laos may also belong to Denisovans.

The probable identification of the jawbone from Taiwan as Denisovan expands the region where scientists know these

ancient people once lived, said Tsutaya.

The partial jawbone was first recovered when a fishing operation dredged the seafloor in the Penghu Channel near the Taiwan Strait. After it was sold to an antique shop, a collector spotted it and purchased it in 2008, then later donated it to Taiwan's National Museum of Natural Science. Based on the composition of marine invertebrates found attached to it, the fossil was dated to the Pleistocene era. But exactly which species of early human

ancestor it belonged to remained a mystery.

The condition of the fossil made it impossible to study ancient DNA. But recently, scientists in Taiwan, Japan and Denmark were able to extract some protein sequences from the incomplete jawbone. An analysis showed some protein sequences resembled those contained in the genome of a Denisovan fossil recovered in Siberia. The findings were published in the journal Science.

Istanbul residents spend night outdoors after earthquake

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Istanbul

Many Istanbul residents spent the night outdoors, too fearful to return to their homes, following a strong earthquake and over 180 aftershocks.

The magnitude 6.2 quake tremor that struck on Wednesday deeply impacted the city of 16 million residents, leaving many inhabitants shaken and wary of a possible more destructive tremor. There were no reports of serious damage but the tremor, the strongest felt in Istanbul in recent years, prompted widespread panic and scores of injuries.

The earthquake had a shallow depth of 10 kilometers (about 6 miles), according to the United States Geological Survey, with its epicentre about 40 kilometers (25 miles) southwest of Istanbul, in the Sea of Marmara. It was felt in several neighbouring provinces. At least 236 people were treated for injuries they suffered while trying to jump from buildings or for panic attacks. Most of the



injuries were in Istanbul, where residents remain on edge because the city is considered at high risk for a major quake. In fear of a stronger earthquake that could demolish homes, residents sought refuge by sleeping in their

cars or setting up tents in parks and other open spaces. Many lit camp fires to keep warm after the temperature dipped. Turkey is crossed by two major fault lines, and earthquakes are frequent. For many, the memory of a devastating earthquake that struck 11 southern and southeastern provinces two years ago, remains vivid.

The 7.8-magnitude earthquake on February 6, 2023, claimed more than 53,000 lives and destroyed or damaged hundreds of thousands of buildings. Another 6,000 people were killed in the northern parts of neighbouring Syria. The Turkish disaster and emergency management agency, AFAD, said Wednesday's earthquake was followed by 184 aftershocks - seven of them of a magnitude 4 or stronger.

Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change Minister Murat Kurum stated that authorities had received 378 reports of structural damage in various buildings. At least 12 buildings had been evacuated as a precautionary measure, he said.

US officials, lawmakers condemn Pahalgam attack

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York

Top Trump administration officials and US lawmakers continued to condemn the Pahalgam terror attack, expressing solidarity with India and stressing that there is no place for terrorism in the world.

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick strongly condemned the horrific terrorist attack and offered prayers for the victims, their families, and all those affected by this senseless act of evil.

immediate shutting down of the Attari land-transit post in view of the cross-border links to the terror attack.

World leaders, including US President Donald Trump and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also condemned the attack. In response to a question on whether the attack could lead to more tensions, Stephane Dujarric, Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General, said, "We're not going to predict or analyse what may happen. I think we're just looking at that incident, that horrific terror attack in which more than 20 people were killed, which we strongly condemn. But I will leave it to analysts as to if that would lead to a rise in tensions."

State senator Matt Lesser from Connecticut said his district has a strong and vibrant South Asian community, asserting that he stands with his "constituents in expressing horror about the recent terrorist attack on tourists and civilians in Kashmir. There can be no excuse for this despicable attack."

Senator Jon Husted from Ohio called the murder of innocent tourists "horrifying." "I hope the terrorists face justice and everyone who lost loved ones finds comfort as they grieve."

Vatican keeps St Peter's open all night for public viewing of Pope Francis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Vatican City

So many mourners lined up to see Pope Francis lying in state in a simple wooden coffin inside St Peter's Basilica that the Vatican kept the doors open all night due to higher-than-expected turnout, closing the basilica for just an hour Thursday morning for cleaning.

respect that I have for him and the great person he was, it's worth the wait." The last numbers released by the Vatican said more than 20,000 people had paid their respects during the first 8 1/2 hours of the public viewing on Wednesday.

who was exiting the basilica Wednesday with her three children in strollers. "They were good, but I don't think they really understood because they haven't yet had to deal with death."

sage of inclusion, the grieving faithful joined the procession of mourners that wended from St Peter's Square through the basilica's Holy Door, with the repentance among them winning an indulgence, a form of atonement granted during the Jubilee Holy Year. From there, the line extended down the basilica's central aisle to the pope's simple wooden casket.

By late Wednesday, the wait appeared to be three or four hours and growing. A person doing crowd management estimated that the wait was closer to five hours. The mourners stretched down the centre of Via della Conciliazione, in a lane set aside for Jubilee pilgrims.

ated that the wait was closer to five hours. The mourners stretched down the centre of Via della Conciliazione, in a lane set aside for Jubilee pilgrims.

The basilica is bathed in a hushed silence as mourners from across the globe make a slow, shuffling procession up the main aisle to pay their last respects to Francis, who died Monday after a stroke.

Like many others, the Scorpatti family from Calabria is in Rome on an Easter vacation, only to be met with the news of Francis' death on Easter Monday. Out of devotion to the pope and his message of inclusion, the grieving faithful joined the procession of mourners that wended from St Peter's Square through the Holy Door into the basilica.

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IN THE COURT OF SH. HEM SINGH, LD. DJ-01, EAST, KOD, COURTS DELHI PC NO. 302/25

NOTICE Notice is hereby given on behalf of our client Sh. Pradeep Sharma owner of Second Floor H. No. 4, Priya Enclave Delhi-52 to M/s Reliance Informatics Ltd., that the legal Demand Notices dated 04/04/2025 sent by the undersigned counsel to your Registered office in Jammargur and Regional Office in Delhi has been returned undelivered.

कायालय नगर पालिक निगम, भोपाल केंद्रीय कर्मशाला (मैके.शाखा) निविदा सूचना

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY MARINE DEPARTMENT No.MD/ACCTS/VAR-05/2025/508 Date: 15/04/2025

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KIND ATTENTION RAIL PASSENGERS! MORE SUMMER SPECIAL TRAINS For the convenience of Rail Passengers, Railways have decided to run the following additional Summer Special Trains as per schedule given below :-

Table with 5 columns: Train No., ARR. DEP., STATIONS, ARR. DEP., Train No. Details for 04304/04303 and 04026/04025.

Table with 5 columns: Train No., ARR. DEP., STATIONS, ARR. DEP., Train No. Details for 04026/04025 and 04022/04021.

Table with 5 columns: Train No., ARR. DEP., STATIONS, ARR. DEP., Train No. Details for 04606/04605 and 04610/04609.

Table with 5 columns: Train No., ARR. DEP., STATIONS, ARR. DEP., Train No. Details for 04610/04609 and 04606/04605.

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'India Inc revenue growth to remain flat'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

India Inc's revenue growth will remain flat at about 5 per cent to 6 per cent in the March quarter, but profitability will widen, a domestic rating agency said on Thursday.

An arm of Crisil Ratings said the operating profit margins are seen at 8 per cent, a widening of up to 0.60 per cent, when compared with the year-ago performance. The agency analysed over 400 companies accounting for over 50 per cent of NSE's market capitalisation to arrive at its estimates. Some companies, especially in the information technology sector have already announced their earnings.

Improved showing by the consumer-driven sectors excluding staples will be a key contributor for the topline growth, while the bottom line will benefit from a

mixed set of aspects which are unique to a sector, it said.

Crisil Intelligence's director Pushan Sharma said consumer discretionary products, services and staple services segment is expected to see 8 per cent to 9 per cent on-year increase in revenue.

The agency analysed over 400 companies accounting for over 50 per cent of NSE's market capitalisation to arrive at its estimates

"This would be led by an expected 15 per cent surge in telecom services revenue resulting from significant tariff hikes implemented in the second quarter and the introduction of premium 5G plans by

telecom operators.

"The retail segment likely saw a robust 17 per cent growth, led by demand in the value fashion, and food and grocery segments, as well as an expansion of store networks," Sharma said.

The automobile sector's revenue likely grew 6 per cent as retail momentum for passenger vehicles picked up and realisations rose owing to a change in the product mix and increasing share of exports, Sharma said. The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) segment is expected to see 4-6 per cent revenue growth led by price hikes amid subdued volume growth, it said, adding that rural demand has been resilient and urban demand has stayed subdued.

Overall exports revenue is likely to grow 4 per cent, including 2-3 per cent growth in IT services revenue following a mar-

ginal improvement in demand and project pick-ups and 8 per cent in the pharmaceutical sector. In the agriculture sector, including fertilisers, revenues are likely to grow 17-19 per cent with consumption improving, following a stable summer crop acreage and higher disposable incomes stemming from better yields and remuneration for kharif paddy.

In construction-linked sectors, revenue growth is seen limited to 1-2 per cent as cheaper steel imports throughout the year resulted in lower prices.

However, steel prices have improved sequentially after the announcement of safeguard duty, it noted.

On the profitability front, its associate director Elizabeth Master said, "the top 10 sectors, which collectively account for over 70 per cent of revenue, showed a mixed trend in EBITDA margins."

Five sectors including export-driven ones such as pharmaceuticals, investment-linked ones such as power, and consumer discretionary such as telecom services, likely saw margin expansion, Master said. Five other sectors — automobile, IT services, FMCG, cement, and steel — saw margins decline in the March quarter.

The automobile sector's EBITDA margin fell by 1 percentage point following a 25 per cent increase in aluminium prices driven by inventory decline and supply concerns in various global regions.

The margin in IT services is estimated to have fallen by up to 0.40 per cent on-year owing to higher marketing and travel spends.

The FMCG sector margin likely slipped 0.50-1 per cent on increased cost of essential inputs such as palm oil, tea and dried coconut kernels, the agency said.

'Regulations alone can't save you if you don't protect yourself': BSE CEO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kolkata

Stressing the need for investor awareness and responsibility, BSE Managing Director and CEO Sundararaman Ramamurthy on Thursday said that regulations alone cannot protect investors if they do not take adequate precautions while investing.

"You trade what you understand, and you understand what you trade - if you don't do that, you have a problem," Ramamurthy said, urging investors to be vigilant and informed.

He criticised the tendency of investors to rely on hearsay rather than due diligence. "You scan a vegetable before you buy it, but when you invest your life's earnings, you go by hearsay - that's not how it should be," he said.

On regulatory expectations, the BSE chief remarked that there is a general perception that regulators are blamed when investors lose money, but when markets do well the same person praise their own knowledge. "If you don't want to safeguard yourself, no amount of regulation can save you. Be alert," he stressed.

Addressing the issue of retail participation while speaking at the Calcutta Chamber of Commerce, Ramamurthy advised that small investors who are not market experts should opt for the mutual fund route - and even then, they should avoid thematic funds and instead choose broad-based mutual funds or large-cap funds to diversify risk.

He also encouraged women and the youth to begin investing early in their careers. Highlighting the potential of India's SME sector, the BSE CEO pointed out that only about 40 companies from this region are currently listed on the stock exchange, while the actual potential could be well over 1,000. He urged more small and medium enterprises to consider listing as a viable route to raise funds and grow their business and unlock their potential.

Responding to a question on possible manipulation in SME listings, Ramamurthy acknowledged that frauds such as pump-and-dump schemes could not be ruled out entirely even if regulators and stock exchanges are vigilant.

Shyam VNL unveils Cyber Solutions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Shyam VNL, a trailblazer in innovation-led security and communication technologies, reaffirmed its leadership in the Homeland Security (HLS) with the launch of next-generation solutions focused on empowering the HLS, CAPF (Central Armed Police Forces) & Security Agencies at the MILIPOL India 2025 exhibition being held at the Yashobhoomi India International Convention & Expo Centre. The event featured a keynote presentation by Rajiv Mehrotra, Chairman of Shyam VNL, highlighting the company's unwavering commitment to national security.

At the Center of attention is Shyam VNL's cutting-edge solution designed to counter the increasing threat of mobile devices covertly embedded in everyday electronic appliances. As spying from homes and offices using concealed devices becomes a rising concern, Shyam VNL introduced its proprietary "Secure Meeting Guard" and "Secure Ops Room Guard" - advanced systems that neutralize all RF transmissions within a specified area. These solutions ensure that no mobile device can operate in sensitive spaces, creating 100% secure, Mobile free zones. Also drawing significant interest



was the company's comprehensive Counter-Drone portfolio, tailored to meet varied operational needs across borders, critical infrastructure, VVIP security, and more. On display were Drone Detection Systems, Networked Directional Drone, Detectors and Jammers, Backpack and Hand Held Drone Detectors & Jammers, Handheld Drone Guns in multiple configurations and Wearable Drone Detection and Jamming Systems - for individual Soldiers. These solutions address the

increasing threat of short-range drone attacks, moving away from traditional long-range surveillance models. By integrating AI and machine learning, Shyam VNL enhances real-time situational awareness and operational responsiveness for ground forces.

Further reinforcing its commitment to the 'Made in India' innovation ecosystem, the company also showcased a range of tactical solutions designed for use by various security agencies, including the Defence sector.

SEBI facilitates ease of doing business for SM REITs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

To facilitate ease of doing business for Small and Medium REITs (SM REITs), markets regulator Sebi has standardised disclosures in draft scheme offer document and simplified public issue processes for such schemes.

In its notification, the regulator has standardised disclosures in scheme offer document by splitting the document into two parts — Key Information of the Trust (KIT) that contains information about the SM REIT, its investment manager, Trustee, and overall structure and Key Information of the Scheme (KIS) that includes details specific to the individual scheme and its assets.

On processing of KIT and KIS, Sebi said that for the first scheme, KIT and KIS will be filed together for its review. For subsequent schemes, only the new KIS needs to be submitted, while KIT is updated for records, and the regulator will review only the KIS. Sebi said any material changes in the KIT will be disclosed through an addendum on the SM REIT's website and reported to the regulator and stock exchanges within seven days.

Further, the investment manager will

have to ensure that KIT is updated every 6 months and the updated KIT is disclosed on the website of SM REIT within 30 days from the end of half-year.

The investment manager is required to file the updated KIT with Sebi and stock exchanges for records within 30 days from the end of half-year.

With regards to proposals for the public issue process for SM REITs, the regulator has extended REIT Guidelines to SM REITs with certain exceptions.

Also, the regulator said a scheme of SM REIT can make an initial offer of its units by way of public issue only. Such an initial offer is required to be made within one year of Sebi's observations.

If not, a fresh draft scheme offer document needs to be filed.

"The minimum subscription amount shall be 90 per cent of the fresh issue size as specified in the KIS in case of a scheme of SM REIT which opts to utilise leverage in accordance with these regulations. The minimum subscription amount shall be 100 per cent of the fresh issue size as specified in the KIS in case of a scheme of SM REIT which does not opt to utilise leverage in accordance with these regulations," Sebi said in its notification

SEBI tweaks framework for ESG rating providers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Markets regulator Sebi has tweaked the framework for ESG Rating Providers (ERPs), especially for those using a subscriber-pays model, requiring them to share ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) rating reports with both subscribers and the rated issuer simultaneously.

This policy needs to be publicly disclosed. To give this effect, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has amended rules governing credit rating agencies in a bid to enhance clarity and transparency.

"An ESG rating provider following a subscriber-pays business model shall share the ESG rating report with its subscribers and the rated entity or the issuer whose securities have been rated at the same time and provide two working days to such rated entity or the issuer to provide its comments," Sebi said in its notification issued on Tuesday.

Further, all comments or clarifications received from the rated entity within the specified timeline will be included in the addendum to the ESG rating report by the ERP.

If the rated entity or the issuer has a different viewpoint on the data stated in the report, ERPs, after taking into account such viewpoint, can either revise the report or issue an addendum to the report with its remarks, for circulation to all its subscribers.

Moreover, ERPs are required to disclose the policy regarding the sharing of ESG rating reports with the rated entity or the issuer whose securities have been rated and the subscribers on its website.

Also ERP will provide a facility to the rated entity or the issuer whose securities have been rated to seek any clarification, including the ESG rating methodology or assumptions.

Sebi has defined subscriber-pays business model as a business model where the ESG rating provider derives its revenues from ESG ratings from subscribers including banks, insurance companies, pension funds, or the rated entity itself.

An ESG rating provider following a subscriber-pays business model will have to ensure that assigned rating is based only on publicly available information and that the fee paid by the subscriber is the lowest fee paid amongst all the subscribers if the rated entity or issuer is a subscriber itself.

Rupee gains 16 paise to settle at 85.29 against US Dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

After a two-day pause, the rupee gained 16 paise to 85.29 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, on weak greenback and overnight decline in crude oil prices.

Forex traders said the rupee strengthened on the weak US dollar and overnight decline in crude oil prices amid slowing US business activity. The US Treasury yields also declined with the 10-year yield falling 3 basis points to 4.35 per cent.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.60 and moved between the intra-day high of 85.25 and the low of 85.67 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 85.29 (provisional), registering a gain of 16 paise over its previous closing level.

On Wednesday, the rupee depreciated 26 paise and settled for the day at 85.45 against the US dollar.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a positive bias as weakness in the US dollar is likely to remain intact amid trade tariff uncertainties. However, risk-on sentiments in the global markets and FII inflows may support the rupee at lower levels. "Traders may take cues from weekly unemployment claims, durable goods orders and existing home sales data from the US. USD INR spot price is

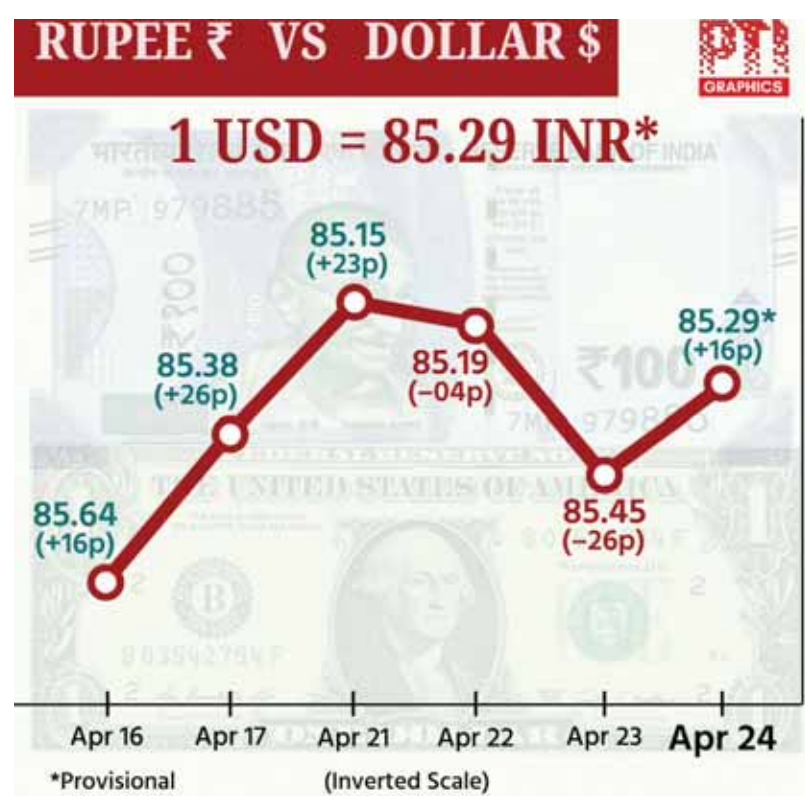
expected to trade in a range of 85 to 85.70," Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading lower by 0.51 per cent at 99.33. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.65 per cent at C 66.55 per barrel in futures trade.

"Near-term technicals for spot USD INR indicate support at 85.03 and resistance at 85.70. High-frequency data suggests a stronger rupee, though geopolitical factors may cap the gains," Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, said.

Traders said heightened geopolitical tensions, following the terror attack in Pahalgam, Jammu & Kashmir, weighed on market sentiment.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday declared that the killers of Pahalgam will be pursued "to the ends of the earth" and promised to "identify, track and punish every terrorist and their backers". India on Wednesday downgraded diplomatic ties with Pakistan and announced a raft of measures, including expulsion of Pakistani military attaches, suspension of the Indus Water Treaty of 1960, and immediate shutting down of the Attari land-transit post in view of the cross-border links to the horrific



Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 civilians were killed.

Gold climbs ₹200 to ₹99,400/10 gm amid US, China standoff

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Gold prices climbed ₹ 200 to ₹99,400 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday following fresh buying by stockists and jewellers and a weak dollar, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity took a U-turn from the historic ₹ 1 lakh-mark and declined ₹ 2,400 to ₹ 99,200 per 10 gram on Wednesday.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also increased ₹ 200 to ₹ 98,900 per 10 grams against the previous close of ₹ 98,700 per 10 grams.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Wednesday said the current trade standoff between the US and China could continue for a while.

Adding to this, there were reports that President Donald Trump signalled that China may receive a new tariff rate in the next "two to three weeks" while countries that are currently in the negotiation phase might see reciprocal tariffs come in if negotiations are not going the way he wants.

According to commodities market experts, remarks by Trump and Bessent help revive demand for the safe-haven bullion following a corrective slide from the all-time peak.

Meanwhile, silver prices appreciated ₹ 700 to ₹ 99,900 per kg on Thursday. The white metal had settled at ₹ 99,200 per kg in the previous close.



In futures trade, gold contracts for June delivery bounced ₹ 1,046, or 1.1 per cent to ₹ 95,768 per 10 grams on the Multi Commodity Exchange.

"Gold opened with a strong gap-up of over ₹ 1,000, hitting ₹ 95,700 on MCX, as Comex gold held firm above \$ 3,300.

The renewed upside came after a sharp shift in the Trump administration's tone — indicating that tariffs may still remain a central part of the conversation before any concrete trade talks with China begin.

"This delay in diplomatic progress, cou-

pled with uncertainty around China's official response, continues to keep risk sentiment elevated," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst, Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said.

Notably, China has yet to issue a strong or clear stance on the trade discus-

Stock market decline after 7-day rally, HUL drops

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower on Thursday amid profit-taking after a seven-day rally and disappointing earnings from Hindustan Unilever.

Selling in blue-chips ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel and a largely muted trend in Asian and European equities also dragged the markets lower. The 30-share BSE benchmark declined 315.06 points or 0.39 per cent to settle at 79,801.43.

During the day, it dropped 391.94 points or 0.48 per cent to 79,724.55. The

NSE Nifty went down by 82.25 points or 0.34 per cent to 24,246.70.

In the past seven trading days, the BSE benchmark gauge zoomed 6,269.34 points or 8.48 per cent and the Nifty jumped 1,929.8 points or 8.61 per cent.

From the Sensex firms, FMCG major Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) dropped 4 per cent after the firm reported a decline of 3.35 per cent in consolidated net profit at Rs 2,475 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2025 on lower margins. In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled lower.

INBRIEF

IGNOU CELEBRATES EARTH DAY

Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi, and Geological Society of India, Bangalore celebrated Earth Day on April 22, 2025, with "Our Power, Our Planet" programs to raise awareness and promote sustainability. The event was sponsored by India's Ministry of Earth Sciences. Earth Day promotes resource conservation for future generations. Earth Day addresses global environmental concerns. It promotes sustainable living to protect the planet.





INDIA'S SEGMENT IN THE BOOK EMPHASISES ON THE STAMPS OF YELLOW-CRESTED COCKATOO ISSUED IN 2016, ENDANGERED SUN CONURE ISSUED IN 2016 AND MANY MORE

PARROTS: Species SHOWN IN PRINT

A blend of nature, art and numismatics, the book is a visual and knowledgeable journey into the lives of parrots at risk, says **ABHI SINGHAL**

The **Endangered Parrots of the World on Stamps, Coins and Banknotes**, by Sushilkumar Agrawal, published by Mintage World is an eye-catching coffee table book that brings together to you the world of stamps, coins and currency notes with the important subject of parrot conservation. The coffee table book has been published by Mintage World, the world's first online museum for vintage and modern coins, stamps and notes. The book is both a collector's treasure and an informative guide for nature lovers and bird enthusiasts.

The colourful book offers a journey through the lives of some of the world's most at-risk parrot species. Based on the latest data from the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (July 2024), it shares useful information about the challenges these birds face around the world. Through its pages, readers can learn about the wide variety of parrot species and why it is so important to protect their natural homes.

The find special in this book for the reader's is its rare collection of over 459 stamps, 37 coins and 12 banknotes released by different countries like India, Ajman, Cuba, Dominica, Mauritius and so many more. Each item features a parrot species that is either threatened or endangered.

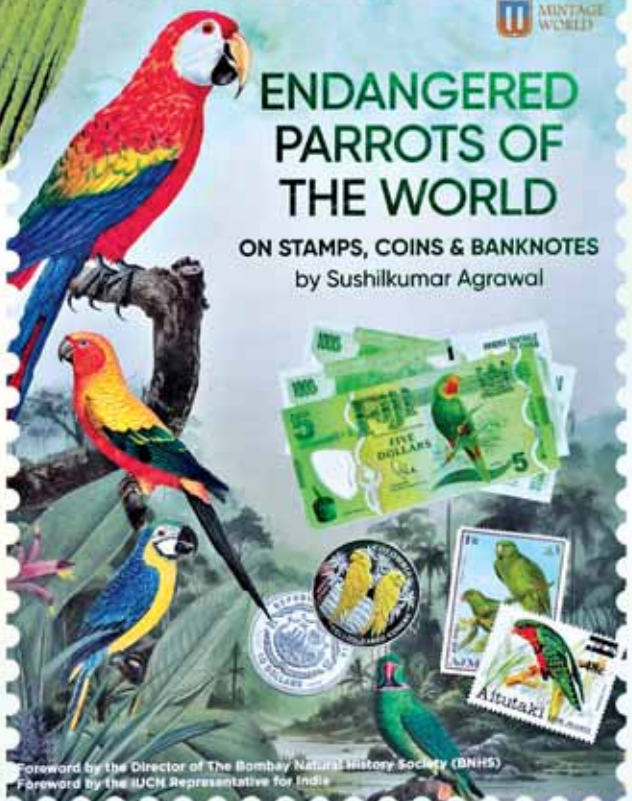
From the colourful Imperial Amazon in Dominica and the clever African Grey Parrot, to the Cockatoo from the Philippines and Brazil's Lear's Macaw, every entry includes background on where the bird is from and why it is at risk. These items are not just shown as collectibles, but as a way to help raise awareness about protecting birds and nature.

Visually, the book is full of bright images and attractive designs. The stamps, filled with detail and colour, show the beauty of each bird. The coins, made from metals like silver, gold, copper and bronze, display detailed artwork of parrots in their natural surroundings. The banknotes offer another level of interest,

SPECIALITY OF THE BOOK LIES IN THE RARE COLLECTION OF OVER 459 STAMPS, 37 COINS AND 12 BANKNOTES RELEASED BY DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

ENDANGERED PARROTS OF THE WORLD

ON STAMPS, COINS & BANKNOTES
by Sushilkumar Agrawal



GLOBAL CATALOGUE

Parrots have accompanied humans since ancient times. They are found on every continent except Antarctica. Some parrot species have exceptional intelligence and mimicking ability, making them great human companions and pets. This book is meant to bring together and catalogue legal stamps, coins, and banknotes issued on parrots. The information is sourced from the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as of July 2024.

showing how countries use these birds to highlight nature and conservation on their currency.

The book also sorts the parrots into five main groups for their readers based on their risk of extinction — Extinct (EX), Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN), Vulnerable (VU) and Nearly Threatened (NT).

This gives readers a clearer picture of the danger each bird is in and the issues they face, such as the illegal pet trade, cutting

down of forests, loss of habitat and climate change.

Talking about the part of India which lies at Page 66 of the book, emphasises on the stamps of Yellow-crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua sulphurea*) issued in 2016, endangered Sun Conure (*Aratinga solstitialis*) issued in 2016 and many more. A buy to fact is that the book also has many interesting facts which will make a good read.

The Parrots on Coins part of the book is equally amazing and visually appealing. This section showcases the parrots on coins issued by different countries like Australia (10 Dollar with Palm Cockatoo — Page 144), Bahamas, Cameroon, Cayman Islands-Cuba, Indonesia, Jamaica (the 10 Jamaican Dollars with Black-billed Parrot- Page 157), Liberia and more.

Whether you're a bird lover, a coin or stamp collector, a conservation supporter or simply someone who enjoys informative books, **Endangered Parrots of the World on Stamps, Coins and Banknotes** is a wonderful addition to your library. It is not just a book - it is a tribute to these amazing birds and a call to action to help protect them for future generations.



A BUY TO FACT IS THAT THE BOOK IS FILLED WITH HIDDEN & INTERESTING FACTS WHICH WILL MAKE A GOOD READ



APRIL READS

LIES OUR MOTHERS TOLD US
Author: Nilanjana Bhowmick
Publisher: Alpha Book Company
Price: ₹699

ENTERING THE MAZE
Author: Krishnagopal Mallick, Niladri Chatterjee
Publisher: Thornbird Books
Price: ₹350

ON DEMOCRACIES AND DEATH CULTS
Author: Douglas Murray
Publisher: HarperCollins
Price: ₹599

THE SECRET OF MORE
Author: Tejaswini Apte Rahm
Publisher: Alpha book company
Price: ₹899

The Erasure of Truth from Our Classrooms

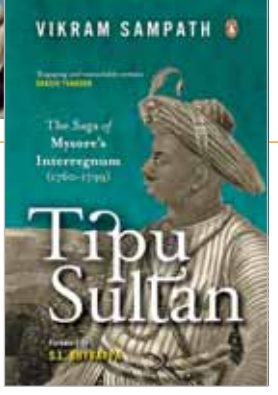
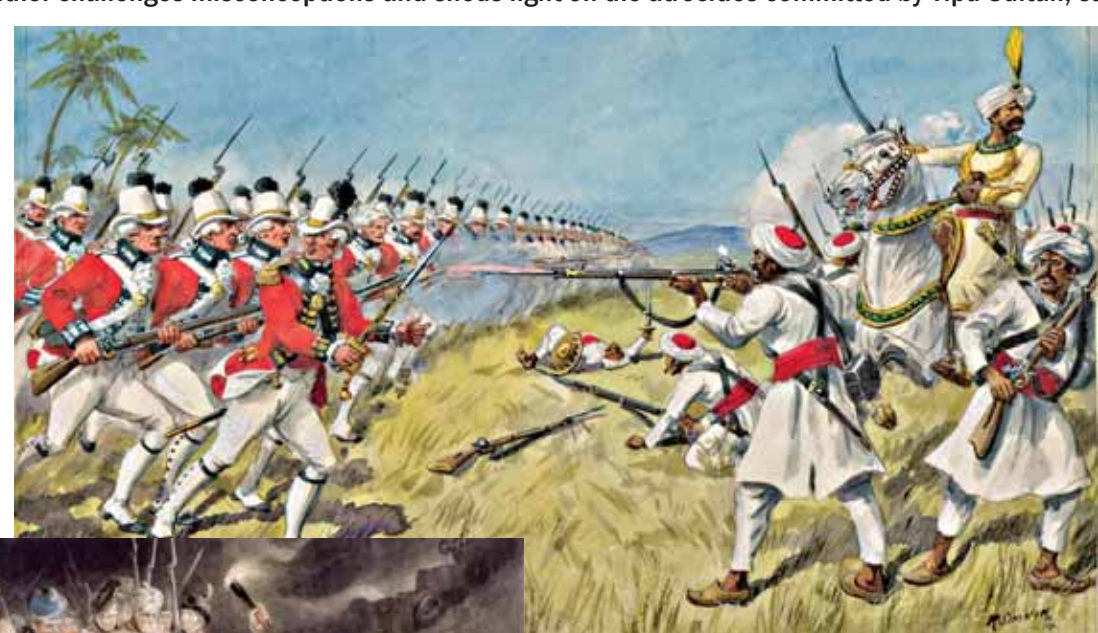
A powerful book revisits distorted narratives and uncovers the legacy of Tipu Sultan's reign, presenting a thought-provoking account of a lesser-known chapter in Indian history, the author challenges misconceptions and sheds light on the atrocities committed by Tipu Sultan, says **KUMAR CHELLAPPAN**

Most of us have heard about the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), formed in 1972 by the Government of India to foster objective and scientific writing of history and to inculcate an informed appreciation of the country's national and cultural heritage.

The ICHR, since the day it was formed, has been jam-packed with Leftist intellectuals who decide what the true history is and what should be told to the world about the history and tradition of the subcontinent. It was the Marxists who constituted the think tank and determined the quality of Indian history. The organisation publishes a journal *Indian Historical Review* (IHR) twice a year and it is said that the publication has a list of historical research undertaken by the eminent historians in the country whose are the last words in history.

The IHR is published by a foreign agency with a dubious track record. The old issues are sold across the counters in ICHR's stalls during book fairs and exhibitions. It is priced at ₹800/- per issue to make sure that ordinary mortals do not buy or read these reviews. Neither Raghuvendra Tanwar, Chairman, nor other members of the ICHR could give an answer to the query why this review is being published by an outside agency while the Council itself is flush with funds. A top official, when asked and pointed out this discrepancy, told this writer, "Dekhenge" (Let's see). The reasons behind the mystery associated with the ICHR are not much to seek. The organisation has a lot to hide from the public eye.

If you have any doubts, please read what has been written by S L Bhyrappa, that wonderful scholar from Mysore, as foreword to **Tipu Sultan — The Saga of Mysore's Interregnum (1760-1799)** authored by Vikram Sampath, the young historian who created a storm with his earlier book on Savarkar. Since 1969, what we read and learn as history in schools and universities in the country is manufactured history and tampered chronicles. The series *Yes, Prime Minister*, authored by Jonathan Lynn and



ABOUT THE BOOK
Book: Tipu Sultan
Author: Vikram Sampath
Publisher: Penguin
Price: ₹1499/-

Antony Jay and telecast as a series by Doordarshan way back in the 1980s, is a good example. There was this cabinet minister in Britain, Right Hon. James Hacker, who was elevated as Prime Minister of the country by accident. Hacker wanted to leave an indelible track record about his tenure and asked Lynn and Jay to edit his memoirs. "We were astonished to discover that, at times, Hacker seems to have de-

orated and rearranged past events in order to present himself in a favourable light... We cannot believe that any politician would rearrange past events deliberately in order to distort the historical record and so we have had to assume that Hacker had some strange defect of mind that frequently led him to ask not "What did I do?" but "What is the most impressive explanation of my actions that cannot be disproved by published facts?"

Bhyrappa says that a meeting of educationists was convened by G Parthasarathy, an acolyte of Indira Gandhi, and asked them to rewrite Indian history to integrate the nation through education. For that to happen, Parthasarathy wanted the educationists to remove the unpalatable truths from Indian history and fill it with half-lies and full lies so that students would

remain ignorant of the cruelties meted out by the likes of Aurangzeb, Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan, all Islamic zealots. What the then government wanted was to black out the cruel deeds and genocides of Hindus by Aurangzeb and others. When Bhyrappa objected to this diktat, he was quickly eased out of the committee and replaced with a Marxist ideologist.

Since then, we have been hearing about Akbar the Great, Aurangzeb the Mighty, and Tipu Sultan the Lion, etc. What Sampath has done in this 904 — page volume is a chronicle of events launched by Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan as rulers of Mysore and the treachery committed by the duo to cleanse the region free of infidels. During Tipu's campaign in the Malabar province, he took into custody thousands of Hindus and asked them: "Sword or Islam?"

Those who refused to get converted to Islam were slaughtered instantly.

The Malabar campaign of Tipu stands out for the murder and mayhem unleashed by him in the region. Not only Malabar, the entire stretch of area from Kasaragod to Kochi bore the brunt of his savage deeds.

Tipu Sultan, portrayed as the embodiment of secularism, had destroyed, demolished, desecrated and plundered thousands of temples spread across Karnataka, Malabar and Kochi. But there are certain forces out to whitewash him as an angel. His father, Hyder Ali, too was a barbarian and had murdered the Wodeyar King who had appointed him as a commander in the Mysore Army.

In yet another book *It Happened Along the Kaveri*, authors Padma Seshadri and Padma Malini had recounted with proof that Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan were the founding fathers of scams and corruption.

Sandeep Balakrishna, in his compendium *Tipu Sultan: The Tyrant of Mysore*, buried Tipu, while Vikram Sampath has erected his gravestone with this work. A moviemaker like Vivek Agnihotri has enough material in this book for a widescreen film. If you miss this book, you are the loser.

In Step with a Republic's Journey

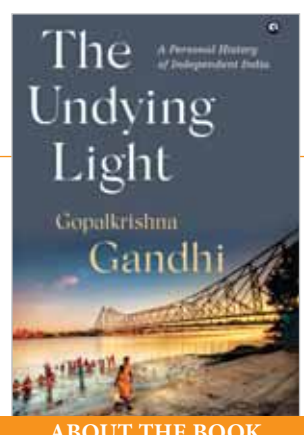
BY TEAM VIVA

The **Undying Light** by Gopalkrishna Gandhi is a deeply personal and panoramic account of India's journey from Independence to the present. With the quiet dignity and precision that characterise his public life, Gandhi weaves together memoir, political commentary, and historical reflection into a work that is both intimate and illuminating.

The book begins with the tragic memory of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, which the author witnessed as a three-year-old—a haunting prelude that sets the emotional tenor for what follows. Across eight distinct sections, he traces the milestones and missteps of independent India through the lens of one who has served at the highest echelons of government, from secretary to two Presidents to governor of West Bengal and Bihar.

The volume moves through the seismic shifts in India's post-Independence trajectory — Partition, the framing of the Constitution, the Emergency, communal violence, the rise of coalitions, and the emergence of majoritarian politics. Gandhi filters these moments through a moral and reflective lens. His writing is meditative and grounded, offering a perspective shaped by first-hand observation and an enduring faith in democratic values. The Emergency is dissected with the same rigour as the demolition of the Babri Masjid; the idealism of the Nehruvian era is weighed alongside the complexities of the present. His reflections on federalism, secularism, and democratic ethics serve as poignant reminders of the principles upon which modern India was built—and the forces now testing their resilience. The book was recently launched by Sharmila Tagore, who described it as a profound reflection on India's rich history and values. The launch also featured a panel discussion with Aruna Roy, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, and Rudrangshu Mukherjee, who shared insights that added depth to Gandhi's perspective.

The **Undying Light** does not aim to dazzle with dramatic flourish, but to illuminate the path of a nation that continues to evolve. It is a considered work—layered, compassionate, and quietly urgent. For readers seeking a deeper engagement with modern Indian history through the lens of a scholar — statesman, this book offers a compelling narrative rooted in lived experience and thoughtful observation.



ABOUT THE BOOK
Book: The Undying Light
Author: Gopalkrishna Gandhi
Publisher: Aleph Book Company
Price: ₹999/-

CSK vs SRH: Battle of survival

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chennai

Chennai Super Kings (CSK) will eye a crucial turnaround at home when they face an equally desperate Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) in a battle of survival in the Indian Premier League here on Friday. Both sides have endured a turbulent season, notching just four points from eight games, and must now win all remaining fixtures to keep their slim qualification hopes alive.

Known to make the most of home conditions, five-time champions CSK find themselves in uncharted territory as they have not been able to read the wickets well at the Chepauk.

They started strong at their fortress, dominating Mumbai Indians as Nour Ahmad spun a web around the visitors. But the early promise fizzled out quickly, with three successive losses at home.

The also endured the ignominy of posting their lowest-ever IPL total at home — 103/9 against Kolkata Knight Riders.

Head coach Stephen Fleming has also voiced frustration over the Chepauk surface, which has offered more to seamers than CSK's usual spin-heavy attack.

There away form has not been any better either, with just one win in four attempts.

CSK have lacked firepower in the batting department and captain Ruturaj Gaikwad's absence due to an injury has only made it worse for the storied outfit.

MS Dhoni has returned as full-time captain. While his knee continues to limit mobility, the former Indian captain's



leadership remains invaluable.

His death-overs batting, field placements, and ability to recalibrate the bowling attack could be key in CSK's revival.

In encouraging signs, 17-year-old Ayush Mhatre made a promising debut against MI with the bat. The franchise has also roped in South Africa's Dewald

Brevis in a bid to strengthen their power-hitting department.

SRH, meanwhile, have endured an equally erratic campaign. A bright start gave way to inconsistency, with their ultra-aggressive, attack-at-all-costs strategy falling flat.

The explosive opening pair of Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma, so vital last

season, have failed to hit the same heights this year.

While Sharma's brilliance secured a win against Punjab Kings, Head is yet to truly make his mark.

The heavy dependence on their top two has exposed the frailty of the middle order, which has struggled to absorb pressure, something head coach Daniel Vettori also conceded after the seven-wicket loss to Mumbai Indians.

"When Head and Abhishek don't succeed, then it's the responsibility of the other batsmen. Potentially that's what we haven't had this season around. The ability for partnerships, for one or two guys to step up," Vettori said.

TEAMS
SUNRISERS HYDERABAD: Pat Cummins (c), Ishan Kishan (wk), Atharva Taide, Abhinav Manohar, Aniket Verma, Sachin Baby, Smaran Ravichandran, Heinrich Klaasen (wk), Travis Head, Harshal Patel, Kamindu Mendis, Wiaan Mulder, Abhishek Sharma, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Mohammed Shami, Rahul Chahar, Simarjeet Singh, Zeeshan Ansari, Jaydev Unadkat, Eshan Malinga.

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS: MS Dhoni (c&wk), Dewald Brevis, Devon Conway, Rahul Tripathi, Shaik Rasheed, Vansh Bedi, Andre Siddharth, Ayush Mhatre, Rachin Ravindra, Ravichandran Ashwin, Vijay Shankar, Sam Curran, Anshul Kamboj, Deepak Hooda, Jamie Overton, Kamlesh Nagarkoti, Ramakrishna Ghosh, Ravindra Jadeja, Shivam Dube, Khaleel Ahmed, Noor Ahmad, Mukesh Choudhary, Nathan Ellis, Shreyas Gopal, Matheesha Pathirana.



Boult backs Rohit Sharma, calls him world-class player

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Hyderabad

Mumbai Indians' pacer Trent Boult has backed "world-class" Rohit Sharma to play a pivotal role in the team's pursuit for a record-extending sixth IPL title, following back-to-back half-centuries that signalled his timely return to form.

The Kiwi left-arm pacer was instrumental in dismantling Sunrisers Hyderabad's famed top order, returning with a match-winning spell of 4/26 to cap MI's fourth straight win in emphatic style.

After SRH collapsed to 143/8, MI, powered by Rohit's commanding 46-ball 70, chased down the target in just 15.4 overs. The emphatic win not only boosted their net run rate but also propelled them to third place on the points table.

"I think the whole side, the whole Mumbai Indians squad possesses some world-class players and obviously Rohit needs no introduction in that regard," Boult said at the post-match media interaction.

"I am sure everyone wants to be contributing at some points, but Rohit's doing a fantastic job of late and playing nicely just at the right time. So he's going to play a huge role for us in the remaining part of the season. I think you just need to be prepared for any role," he added.

Boult also praised captain Hardik Pandya for his leadership style, calling it a refreshing experience.

"Hardik's a passionate cricketer, obviously

ly very skilful. He's a great leader, I think. He leads from the front.

"He's a great communicator. He's one of my favourite Indian cricketers, so to get the chance to play underneath him is a great experience."

Boult, who has adjusted seamlessly into a new role after shifting from Rajasthan Royals to MI, emphasised the importance of adaptability in a long tournament like the IPL.

"At Rajasthan I was prepared to bowl at any stage of the match. I've been lucky enough to play 10 IPL seasons where it hasn't always been the same recipe every time. So I think the first thing is you've got to always want the ball.

"There's some great players in there. Obviously, (Jasprit) Bumrah needs no introduction either, so it's great to be having ball back in hand with him."

Mumbai Indians had just one win in their first five matches, and now they have four on the trot, keeping them firmly placed for a playoff berth. But Boult is not looking too far ahead.

"Momentum wasn't on our side to start with, but to turn it around to have four wins in a row was the focus, just to get a bit of momentum, a bit of rhythm. Guys playing nice cricket at certain points. We're not going to look too far ahead.

"It can quickly change. Looking forward to getting back home, playing in some conditions that we know pretty well, but there's a long way to go in this tournament," he added.

SRH need support from middle order: Coach Vettori

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Hyderabad

Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) head coach Daniel Vettori admitted that a dramatic top-order collapse coupled with a wrong "assessment" of the pitch proved decisive in their crushing defeat to Mumbai Indians.

The big-hitting SRH top order slumped to 24/4 in the powerplay, and despite a fighting partnership between Heinrich Klaasen (71) and impact substitute Abhinav Manohar (43), the hosts could only manage 143/8, a total that proved woefully inadequate on a pitch that has

already seen two 240-plus totals this season. "The toss was important — we wanted to bowl first. The wicket was different from what we'd seen before, and while we had discussed the possibility of a 250-280 surface, the conditions changed dramatically. It was tough to assess the par score early on," he said at the post-match press conference.

"Once we got through two overs, the assessment was that it was not the 250-260 wicket that this has been the last couple of games. And we obviously went out of depth." He said their strategy was to go all out in the powerplay but the plan

unravelling quickly.

"We wanted to maximise the powerplay, but unfortunately we kept losing wickets and once we realised that the surface wasn't what we anticipated, then we needed to build towards that sort of 180 score, and that unfortunately became difficult to do when you're 24/4 after the power play.

Vettori said Ishan Kishan's bizarre dismissal only added pressure to the team.

Batting at number 3, Ishan Kishan stunned everyone by walking off, indicating a faint edge, even as none of the MI players appealed and the on-field umpire was on the verge of signalling a wide.

"Ishan's dismissal was obviously disappointing, and that put pressure on everyone coming in. When you are in a power play situation, you still want to try and maximise those two fielders out."

Vettori said there's a need for better game awareness and support from the middle order when the aggressive top-order duo of Head and Abhishek fail to fire.

"Travis and AB, when they go, they are very aggressive and they take the game on and it's led to a lot of success for us. And when they don't succeed, then it's the responsibility of the other batsmen.

Real Madrid beats Getafe 1-0 in Spanish league

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Madrid

Real Madrid kept pace with Spanish league leader Barcelona with a 1-0 win at Getafe ahead of the rivals' meeting in the Copa del Rey final.

Arda Güler scored a first-half goal for Madrid, which moved back within four points of Barcelona. The Catalan club edged Mallorca 1-0 on Tuesday.

Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti used many reserves ahead of Saturday's Copa final in Seville. Brazil forward Endrick made his first Spanish league start with the club, and Vinicius Júnior was substituted in the second half. Jude Bellingham came off the bench in the second half.

Midfielder Eduardo Camavinga had to be replaced because of an apparent muscle injury in the final minutes and is doubtful to be available for Saturday's

was important to give us confidence for the final (on Saturday)."

Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois made a couple of difficult saves late to secure Madrid's victory.

It was the third league win in a row for Madrid, which endured a Champions League elimination against Arsenal in the competition's quarterfinals.

Getafe has lost three in a row, and four of its last five league games. The club from southern Madrid sits in 12th place.

The match was briefly stopped in the second half as fans from Getafe chanted "Die (Dani) Ceballos, die Ceballos."

CELTA WINS AGAIN

Celta Vigo moved to seventh place by routing fifth-place Villarreal 3-0 at home with goals by Fer López, Borja Iglesias and Iago Aspas.

The victory ended a two-match losing

Liverpool must wait to clinch Premier League title after Arsenal draws with Crystal Palace

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

One more point. That's all Liverpool needs to secure a record-tying 20th English top-flight title after second-place Arsenal drew 2-2 with Crystal Palace in the Premier League.

Arne Slot's runaway leaders can take care of business on Sunday by avoiding defeat to Tottenham in what is set to be a big party at Anfield. A draw or a win would ensure Liverpool cannot be caught by Arsenal with four more rounds remaining and therefore clinches a second title in five years, tying with fierce rival Manchester United on number 20 overall.

Becoming the champion in 2020 ended the storied club's 30-year title drought but Liverpool's players couldn't celebrate in front of their fans because of restrictions during the pandemic.

They'll try to make up for it this weekend. Arsenal twice squandered the lead at Emirates Stadium, with Jean-Philippe Mateta taking advantage of a defensive

error by William Saliba to score Palace's second equaliser in the 83rd and leave Arsenal 12 points behind Liverpool.

Arsenal, which started with star forward Bukayo Saka on the bench, looked vulnerable throughout against Palace, with its players perhaps having an eye on the Champions League semifinals against Paris Saint-Germain starting next week.

"We have the most important game of the season in six days," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said. "We need to get our energy back."

ARSENAL BATTLING TO HOLD OFF RESURGENT CITY

Arsenal has been runner-up to Manchester City in the Premier League the previous two seasons and is facing a third straight second-place finish.

However, an improving City — a 2-1 winner over Aston Villa on Tuesday — is only six points back in third place after Arsenal's 13th draw of an inconsistent campaign.

The hosts went ahead through Jakub Kiwior's header at a free kick in the third

minute, only for Palace to reply when playmaker Eberechi Eze met a corner with a brilliantly taken downward volley that skimmed off the turf and flew in off the post in the 27th.

Leandro Trossard wriggled free in the area and scored with a deflected shot in the 42nd minute to restore Arsenal's lead. Mateta, a second-half substitute, had the final say, though, by capitalising on Saliba's poor pass and floating a shot over stranded goalkeeper David Raya from around 40 meters.

PALACE SWITCHES FOCUS TO THE FA CUP

Palace remained in 12th place and has little to play for in the Premier League. It is, however, heading into an FA Cup semifinal game against Aston Villa on Saturday in better heart.

"It's important to keep this energy and confidence for the semifinal on Saturday," Palace manager Oliver Glasner said.

"It was not our goal to decide the title, it was our goal to win the game. I think a draw is a very good result.

Italian teenager Federico Cina wins ATP Masters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Madrid

Italian teenager Federico Cina picked up his second ATP Masters 1000 victory by defeating Coleman Wong in straight sets at the Madrid Open, while Gael Monfils became the oldest winner in the tournament's history. The 38-year-old Monfils rallied from a poor start to defeat qualifier Borna Gojo 1-6, 6-2, 6-4 for his first win in Madrid since 2022. The 42nd-ranked Monfils is a two-time quarterfinalist at the Masters 1000 clay-court event.

"At the beginning, he served one second serve," Monfils said of Gojo. "I think he had a 94 first-serve percentage, he played great. I (let the) storm pass, then different tactics. I served more with kick and tried to play a little bit different, maybe let him go and not do so much. At the end, just run, run to the ball. It's not a pretty win, but it's a win."

The 18-year-old Cina won 7-6 (5), 6-1 to back up his victory over current No. 70 Francisco Comesaña in Miami last month, which marked his ATP 1000 debut. He saved both break points he faced against Wong and finished with 19 winners. "Before the match I was a little bit tight but after a few games I started to feel good," said the 373rd-ranked Cina, a wild-card entry who will next face American Sebastian Korda.

"It is really special to win a match at this event." Monfils next meet seventh seed defending champion Andrey Rublev, who defeated Monfils two weeks ago in the round of 32 in Monte Carlo. Alexander Bublik beat Alex Michelsen 7-6 (2), 7-6 (4), while Comesaña got past Spaniard Pedro Martinez 6-4, 6-4 at the clay-court tournament.

Nuno Borges of Portugal rallied to defeat home-crowd favorite Pablo Carreno Busta 6-7 (7), 7-6 (3), 6-3, while Arthur Rinderknech defeated Roman Safiullin 7-6 (4), 6-1. Christopher O'Connell got past Camilo Ugo Carabelli 6-3, 6-4.

RETURNING MOTHERS

Belinda Bencic, who returned from maternity leave last October, defeated Zeynep Sonmez 6-0, 6-2 on the first birthday of her daughter, Bella. Three-time Madrid Open champion Petra Kvitova, who was back from her maternity leave in February, lost 6-4, 6-0 to Katie Volynets.

Anastasija Sevastova, who has played infrequently since giving birth in late 2022, defeated Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-4, 7-5. Emma Raducanu had her first win on outdoor clay since 2022, coming from a break down in both sets to beat Suzan Lamens 7-6 (4), 6-4.



final. He had entered the match at halftime to replace defender David Alaba, who is also doubtful because of a muscle ailment.

"We'll see, but it's unlikely that they will be available on Saturday," Ancelotti said.

Madrid had demoralizing losses in both "clásicos" against Barcelona this season — 5-2 in the Spanish Super Cup final and 4-0 in their first league encounter at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium.

Güler scored the winner with a well-placed right-footed shot in the 21st minute at the Coliseum in Getafe.

"Fortunately, I scored the goal that gave us the three points," Güler said. "We knew it was going to be a tough match. It

streak for the Vigo team. Villarreal, winless in two matches, played a man down from the 37th after Eric Bailly was sent off with a straight red card.

WILLIAMS SCORES EARLY

Iñaki Williams scored five minutes into the match to give fourth-place Athletic Bilbao a 1-0 win over Las Palmas, helping the Basque Country club to open an eight-point gap above Villarreal, which remains with a game in hand.

Las Palmas, sitting in 18th place, was coming off two wins in a row after a 12-match winless streak in the league.

Alaves moved out of the relegation zone by beating ninth-place Real Sociedad 1-0 at home with a goal by Nahuel Tenaglia in the 65th.

AC Milan ruins Inter's treble bid with derby win to reach Italian Cup final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Milan

AC Milan has not achieved much this season — except when playing city rival Inter Milan.

Milan ruined Inter's bid for a treble and advanced to the Italian Cup final with a 3-0 derby win Wednesday courtesy of two goals from Luka Jovic.

It was Milan's third win over Inter this season, having also beaten the Nerazzurri in the Italian Super Cup final in January.

"It was a very important game for us. As you know we are not that good in Serie A. We had to show the quality today. We had to show the character," Jovic said. "And we showed it and we are going to Rome." And if Milan can win another trophy, coach Sergio Conceicao might have a chance at keeping his job — despite the seven-time European champion sitting ninth in Serie A.

Winning the Italian Cup — which carries a Europa League berth — could be Milan's only route to a spot in continental play for next season.

Milan advanced on 4-1 aggregate following a 1-1 first leg. Bologna brings a 3-0 lead over Empoli into the second leg of the other semifinal on Thursday.

The final is scheduled for May 14 in Rome. Inter pressed forward early on and Federico Dimarco struck the crossbar in the 23rd. But Jovic put Milan ahead 13

minutes later with a powerful header and then doubled the advantage from close range shortly after the break.

Tijjani Reijnders added another for Milan in the 85th by finishing off a full team move.

"We have a lot of belief," Reijnders said. "We have difficulties in the league but we

If Milan can win another trophy, coach Sergio Conceicao might have a chance at keeping his job — despite the seven-time European champion sitting ninth in Serie A

know this is the fastest way to reach (Europe). And if we play like we did today we can win this trophy."

It was Inter's second straight loss after the Serie A leader fell 1-0 at Bologna on Sunday. Inter will play Barcelona in the Champions League semifinals.

JUVENTUS POSTS FIRST LOSS UNDER TUDOR

Juventus wasted a chance to move back into the Champions League places following a 1-0 loss at Parma in a rescheduled Serie A match.

Parma forward Mateo Pellegrino scored

with a header in first-half stoppage time. Juventus remained fifth, one point behind Bologna, with five rounds remaining. Making matters worse for Juventus was that center forward Dusan Vlahovic came off at halftime with an apparent thigh issue. Juventus was also in fifth place when it fired Thiago Motta last month and hired Igor Tudor as its new coach for the remainder of the season. It was Juventus' first loss under Tudor, following two wins and a draw.

Cristian Chivu took over as Parma coach in February and the team is on a six-game unbeaten run that also includes a 2-2 draw with Serie A leader Inter Milan this month.

Parma-Juventus was one of four matches postponed from Monday due to the death of Pope Francis. Each game was preceded by a moment of silence to mourn the pope, who died Monday at 88.

LAZIO BACK IN 6TH

Lazio leapfrogged city rival Roma and moved back into sixth place — level on points with Juventus — with a 2-0 win at 10-man Genoa.

Valentin Castellanos and Boulaye Dia scored for Lazio after Genoa defender Sebastian Otoa was shown a direct red card in his Serie A debut for pushing down Mattia Zaccagni.